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**Popular Rejoicing and Public Ritual in Norwich and
Coventry, 1660-cl835.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

- i Summary
- ii Acknowledgements
- iii Abbreviations

Part One.

- 1. Introduction
- 24. Chapter One: The Context; Norwich and Coventry from the Restoration to Municipal Reform
- 56. Chapter Two: The Shared Holiday Calendar
- 81. Chapter Three: A tale of two cities; the local holiday calendars of Coventry and Norwich 1660-1835
- 108. Chapter Four: The Institutional Framework: the role of the parish, the trading company, the friendly society and the political club in the festive life of Norwich and Coventry

Part Two

- 136. Chapter Five: The commercialisation of rejoicing and ritual
- 172. Chapter Six: Politics, popular rejoicing and the language of the holiday crowd 1660-1746
- 207. Chapter Seven: Politics, popular rejoicing and the language of the holiday crowd (II) 1747-1835
- 247. Chapter Eight: The divergence of polite and plebeian cultures in Norwich and Coventry 1660-cl835

Part Three

- 290. Chapter Nine: The Guild Day in Norwich 1660-1835
- 334. Chapter Ten: The Godiva Procession in Coventry 1678-cl850
- 378. Conclusion.

Bibliography.

- Appendices: A. The dates of the major festivals on the holiday calendars of Norwich and Coventry
- B. Maps of Norwich and Coventry.
- C. Notices (with details of route) of the Godiva Procession
- D. Political flysheets making use of Snap, the Norwich Dragon..

Summary.

This thesis is about popular rejoicing and public ritual in Norwich and Coventry from the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 to the Reform of the Municipal Corporations in 1835. It is distinctive in at least two ways; first in its attention to the local context, and second in its examination of public festivity as a separate, but not an isolated, cultural form. Previous studies of the subject have generally looked at rejoicing and ritual as but one strand of a larger, fairly amorphous, popular culture and done so on a national or even a continental level.

The study is divided into three parts. The first is largely descriptive; an account of the festive events, whether on the annual holiday calendar or not, which took place in Norwich and Coventry at or about 1750. This not only sets the scene for the analysis which follows, it also indicates the extent to which rejoicing and ritual was subject to social, political and economic change. That this was so will become clear in the second part of this study which identifies the three major developments to affect the conduct of and attitudes to public festivity at Norwich and Coventry in this period; commercialisation, political change and the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures. The extent to which the impact of these developments varied between the two cities is also explored in this section, as it is in part three of the thesis which is made of two case studies, one of the Norwich Guild and the other of the Coventry Show Fair. The very different form and fortune of these two events will be seen to confirm the importance of studying rejoicing and ritual in relation to the most immediate context in which it was performed.

Acknowledgements.

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Abbreviations

C.C.R.O; Coventry City Record Office.
C & WC; Coventry and Warwickshire Collection.
J.C.M; Jopsons' Coventry Mercury.
M.C.B; Mayor's Court Book (Norwich).
N.G; Norwich Gazette.
N.M; Norwich Mercury.
N.N.R.O; Norfolk and Norwich Record Office.
V.C.H; Victoria County History.
W.R.O; Warwick County Record Office.
O.S; Old Style (i.e. pre-1752 calendar dates).

Introduction.

The history of popular rejoicing and public ritual, per se, has been relatively neglected. Certainly for the period from the Restoration to Municipal Reform, it has more often been studied as just one strand of a fairly amorphous popular culture, or more centrally and specifically, in terms of " custom, ceremony and community." As such it has received a good deal of attention in recent years.

The fascination of rejoicing and ritual for historians of popular culture in early modern England is quite understandable. For as the most public, and readily accessible, manifestation of that society as a unitary interrelating whole, such events provide the best opportunities for observing and assessing the changes, as well as the continuities, in the relationships between key social groups. More particularly, this most communal, but at the same time potentially anarchic, of all cultural activity could, and in a historical perspective can, act as a barometer of the relative harmony or tension between the rulers and the ruled.

Perhaps the most obvious example of its utility in this respect is that given by historians of an earlier era than our own; those concerned with the years from the Reformation to the execution of Charles I, who have turned to public festivity, and specifically to its collapse in the later part of that period, as a means of measuring and expressing the impact of Puritanism upon a

formerly Catholic society.[1] In a similar way students of popular culture in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, have used the fate of collective rejoicing and ritual as an illustration of how the relative harmony in social relations established after the Restoration, gradually broke down in the face of calls for industrial efficiency and social reform.

Among this latter group, Dr Malcolmson and Bob Bushaway stand out as specialists in the field.[2] The work of the former, on Popular Recreations in English Society from 1700 to 1850 was the first attempt for many years to bring the insight of the professional historian to an area of study which had long been abandoned to the disparate and sometimes erroneous labours of genteel antiquaries and to the questionable judgements of the pre-War school of English folklorists. The academic disrepute into which the latter fell after the publication of The Golden Bough by Sir James Frazer in 1890 infected the subjects they studied to such an extent, that, among historians, work upon recreation,

1. Notably C.Hill in Society and Puritanism in pre-Revolutionary England pp 183-217, Keith Wrightson English Society 1580-1680, and at a local level Charles Pythian-Adams "Ceremony and the Citizen; the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550" in Clark and Slack (ed), Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700 pp 57-84.
2. R.W. Malcolmson, Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850; Bob Bushaway, By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880.

leisure and the like was treated with disrespect and disdain.[3]

In what was, therefore, a path finding study Malcolmson, aware of the problems which had dogged the recent studies of his subject, looked back to the work of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century antiquaries for a lead.[4] Like them he concentrated much of his efforts on recreations which took place within the context of the holiday calendar; an institution which provided the site for most of the organised leisure in early modern England. In doing so he opened a Pandora's box of enquiry and debate.

His main concern was the impact of social and economic change upon the leisure lives of the English people, in general, and of the labouring poor, in particular. Of how with

the gradual breakdown of what we now call "traditional society". With the rise of a market economy, and the accompanying development of new normative standards and material conditions for the conduct of social relations, the foundations of many traditional practices were relentlessly swept away, leaving a vacuum which would be only gradually reoccupied, and then of necessity by novel or radically revamped forms of diversion.[5]

3. The study of English folklore effectively ended in the universities after the publication of The Golden Bough by Sir James Frazer in 1890. The extremely critical reaction to this work, which seemed to be the ultimate example of an academic pursuit characterised by condescension, ignorant of context, and dedicated largely to the discovery of a common Aryan inheritance, dragged the entire discipline down. It is only recently that the study of folklore has shown signs of recovery in the institutional sense, although much valuable work has been done outside. See E.P. Thompson, Folklore, Anthropology and Social History pp 5-6.

4. Works like John Brand, Observations on Popular Antiquities and Henry Bourne, Antiquitates Vulgares; or the Antiquities of the Common People.

5. Malcolmson, *Op Cit*, p 170

Among the "traditional practices" he examined, his account of the annual bull running at Stamford in Lincolnshire, and of its suppression, provided particular inspiration for this thesis.[6]

Much of Malcolmson's attention was directed at popular recreations under attack. For him the crescendo of moral and political criticism aimed at various forms of recreation and leisure in the late eighteenth century was merely the dawn chorus to a more intense and comprehensive offensive against the pleasures of the people during the early to mid parts of the nineteenth; an offensive conducted by the more self consciously polite members of the upper and middling classes against the wishes and the interests of the poor. In this context many popular holiday activities, and particularly those which posed a threat to public order, came under critical and, occasionally, fatal scrutiny. By 1850 a once varied and extended holiday calendar had been reduced to a shadow of its former self.

To a certain extent Dr Malcolmson set the agenda, and the chronology, for later studies of a similar kind. Nearly a decade later Bob Bushaway took up many of the same themes, although he also extended the field of study considerably. His work benefitted from the more community based and custom orientated endeavours of social historians during the intervening years, as well as the growing and progressively fertile relationship between history, sociology and anthropology. Given that

6. Ibid pp 126-33

advantage perhaps the most important feature of a generally incisive study was his description and analysis of the holiday calendar of the poor (that collection of doling days " in the months before Christmas, at Epiphany, and around May Day") and of the symbiosis between the customs of privation and those of protest. The relationship between these two apparently different cultural forms was made clear through a study of the Captain Swing riots of ~~1830-31~~ in which the agricultural poor appropriated and deployed traditional holiday practices, in general, and charivari and doling, in particular, as a means of expression, legitimation, and negotiation.[7] Bushaway concluded that " the followers of Captain Swing, the heroes of local mummers plays, and the participants in parish calendar rituals were the same people" and that in " many cases their motives and their actions were also the same." [8] In doing so he added a new and exciting dimension to the study of rejoicing and ritual itself.

Bushaway and Malcolmson both operated upon a national canvass. In the years between their two publications probably the most significant, and certainly the most ambitious, addition to the historiography of rejoicing and ritual was the rather more extensive work of Peter Burke on Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe. In it he attempted to schematise the labours of a variety of historians and antiquaries from almost every European country in respect of the years from 1500 to 1800. Concentrating, like those before him, on the relationship

7. Bushaway, *Op Cit*, pp 167-202.

8. *Ibid* p 202

between popular culture and socio-economic change, he was able to produce a continental chronology of reform.

According to Burke there were two distinct phases of reform, each comprising about half of the entire period with which he was concerned. The second of these, between 1650 and 1800 was dominated by Lay evangelists articulating secular arguments (in contrast to the highly religious bent of the first) and saw the fairly comprehensive "triumph of Lent" throughout the more or less carnivalesque world of early modern Europe. The victory of the reformers was particularly clear in England; its relative lack of a carnival tradition, its role at the heart of the Reformation, and its place in the forefront of the Industrial Revolution, all combined to make it comparatively easy ground for them to gain. [9]

Within the context of reform Burke's major theme was the divergence of what he chose to call the "great" and the "little" traditions. The end result of that process was that by 1800 "in most parts of Europe, the clergy, the nobility, the merchants, the professional men - and their wives - had abandoned popular culture to the lower classes, from whom they were separated, as never before, by profound differences in world view." The process itself was easily explained in terms of the relative speed at which the two traditions had changed; for while the culture of the learned had been affected dramatically by the combined force of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Scientific and Commercial

9. P. Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, pp 247-278.

Revolutions, the culture of the masses had proved rather conservative and had remained essentially the same.[10]

Thus explained Burke's scheme seems rather grandiose, and for a historian of context, open to obvious question. This would certainly be true were it not for the fact that he took great care to qualify his thesis by discussing the "unity and variety of popular culture" and through attention to the different pace and nature of cultural change in different localities, regions and nations. This divergence within a divergence was variously, but not exclusively, explained by differences in geography, politics, occupational structure and religion.[11]

In displaying this sensitivity to the highly heterogenous nature of European culture, Burke, almost paradoxically, exposed the serious limitations inherent in the national perspective adopted by those, such as Malcolmson, who had preceeded him. For despite Malcolmson's warning, delivered on the basis of his experience of diffuse and often unreliable sources, that "the returns are likely to be most satisfactory if the research net is widely cast" and that "a close study of one or two localities is likely to be less rewarding" it must be the case that progress in the study of popular culture, as a whole, and rejoicing and ritual, in particular, depends on moving from the general to the specific. For it is only by descending to the local level

10. Ibid pp 270, 280-1

11. Ibid pp 23-64

that the presumably valid hypotheses of Burke, Bushaway and Malcolmson can be put to the test.[12]

How valuable such contextual studies can be has only become apparent in recent years. Perhaps the most relevant such work in relation to this thesis, is that of Charles Phythian-Adams upon " ceremony and the citizen; the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550." Despite working on a much earlier and a very different period than that with which this thesis is concerned, Phythian-Adams succeeded, like few before or after him, in relating the nature and the conduct of public ritual to the structure of the community in which it took place and the disappearance of a rich and varied holiday calendar in the century which followed to the emergence of a radical Puritan elite. The work of Phythian-Adams will be looked at in greater depth at the beginning of chapter three. For now let us continue this review of the historiography of public festivity.

The history of ritual in context has been taken a stage further by the work of David Cannadine on the Colchester Oyster Feast and royal ceremonial from 1820 to 1977.[13] The light he has been able to shed upon the meaning of these events by his close attention to local detail is a tribute to the value of viewing public festivity against the most immediate social, economic and

12. Malcolmson Op Cit, p 3. I think this criticism is rather less valid with respect to Bushaway who has gone to great lengths to point to local idiosyncracies within the holiday calendar; Bushaway Op Cit p 34.

13. "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual; the British Monarchy and the Invention of Tradition c 1820-1977", in Hobsbawm and Ranger (ed), The Invention of Tradition, pp 101-163: "The Transformation of Civic Ritual in Modern Britain; The Colchester Oyster Feast," in Past and Present no 94, pp 107-30.

political background. That said Cannadine did not neglect national or even international developments of relevance to his subject; this was particularly true in his analysis of royal pageantry which he took care to place against the backdrop of Britain's evolving role as an imperial power.

The desirability of such an essentially balanced approach to the study of rejoicing and ritual is further confirmed by John Brewer in his seminal article on the mock mayor making ceremony at Garrat.[14] In that work he was chiefly concerned with the relationship between politics and public festivity. This has been a point of contention in recent years; an issue most hotly disputed perhaps from the perspective adopted by Gareth Stedman Jones in his paper on "class expression versus social control; a critique of recent trends in the social history of leisure." [15] In that article Jones warned against the proclivity to overpoliticise popular holiday and the tendency to endow the history of leisure, in general, with more significance or social meaning than it truly deserves. Unfortunately in an otherwise valid argument he exaggerated his case, and ended up by belittling a subject which he had initially promised to place in perspective.

That there could be more than a catalytic or occasional relationship between politics and popular holiday is clear from the documented attempts of both radicals and conservatives to appropriate the mock

14. John Brewer, "Theatre and Counter Theatre in Georgian Politics; the mock elections at Garrat" in Radical History Review no 22 pp 7-40.

15. As published in Languages of Class pp 77-89.

election at Garrat for their own narrowly sectarian purposes. The fact that both ultimately failed is more of indication of popular rejoicing's resilience against crude attempts to manipulate it, than a denial of its potential or a reflection upon the determination of those who sought to use it.

The facility of the festive medium in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century for political struggle has also been illustrated in the work of John Stevenson on the Hanoverian holiday calendar and by Tom Laqueur in his article on the Queen Caroline affair. Both would tend to confirm Brewer's notion that popular rejoicing was "a vital component of politics" itself, as well as Edward Thompson's belief that even though public festivity was essentially symbolic terrain it was well worth fighting for in an age where symbolism was the very stuff of political and social hegemony. [16]

Apart from its significance as a pointer towards the very fertile relationship between popular rejoicing and politics in the late eighteenth century, the study of the mock elections at Garrat was also important as one of the few existing monographs of an individual holiday as it developed over time. Brewer has been joined in this rare achievement by David Cannadine and by Robert Storch, the latter of whom was able to trace the disappearance or the reorganisation of Bonfire

16. J. Stevenson, Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1870 p 18; Tom Laqueur, "The Queen Caroline Affair; Politics as Art in the reign of George IV", in Journal of Modern History 1982 pp 417-66; Brewer, Op Cit, p 34; E.P Thompson, "Eighteenth Century English Society; Class Struggle without Class ?" in Social History Vol 3:2 p 158.

Night celebrations within the very specific context of a number of Victorian Southern English towns. Dr Storch's work in this respect was the original inspiration for this thesis, pointing, as it did, to the importance of "local constellations", generally, and to the class structure of each town, particularly, in determining whether the Fifth was destroyed or reformed.[17]

This section on the historiography of rejoicing and ritual has been necessarily selective and almost entirely descriptive. A more comprehensive idea of the range of secondary sources, from within and outside the discipline of history, as well as a view of the obvious limitations and the criticisms to which they are subject, will emerge in the following chapters and in the next section on the organisation of the thesis itself. However, before moving on, it is necessary to address a central, if essentially distracting, debate on the meaning, or rather the function, of rejoicing and ritual, if only to dispense with it once and for all and allow this thesis to move to a higher ground.

In its classic form there are two sides to the argument about the function of rejoicing and ritual. Firstly there are those who see popular holiday, in particular, and recreation and leisure, generally, as an occasion for letting off steam. The champions of this cause believe that after such fun and games the people, now more relaxed and contented, can return with greater

17. R.W. Storch, "Please to remember the Fifth of November; Conflict, Solidarity and Public Order in Southern England" in Storch (ed), Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth Century England.

vigour to an otherwise difficult daily lot. Frequently articulated by contemporary observers this view has gained a modern credence from the work of social anthropologists like Turner and Van Gennep who, in examining ritual and rejoicing as Rites of Passage, have often expressed, or at least implied, the belief that such manifestations often provided merely a prelude to the reconstitution of a strengthened status quo.[18]

This argument is based on the premise that public festivity acts as a temporary release from the taboos, the norms and the structures of every day life; an assumption shared by those on the other side of the functional fence. This second group differs from the first, however, in viewing rejoicing and ritual not as a means to a consensual end, but rather as an occasion for victims of social, political and economic oppression to attack the sensitivities, the property and sometimes the persons of their enemies and oppressors. Their case is strengthened by the numerous times in the medieval, the early modern and the modern periods alike, when public festivity has erupted into riot or disorder.

Both of these arguments about the function of rejoicing and ritual share one valid point; namely the view of popular holiday as a space where the ties of

18. This debate is addressed at length in Burke, Op Cit, pp 199-204; Natalie Zemon Davis, Society and Culture in Early Modern France pp 102, 122; A. Van Gennep The Rites of Passage; V. Turner The Ritual Process: Structure and anti-Structure p 126. It must be stressed that Turner does recognise the double potential of ritual for control and protest. But his major judgement on Rites of Passage as allowing people to leave a "structure, experience community, only to return to structure revitalised" seems to me to encourage the kind of thinking to which I have referred.

social and economic deference and dependence are temporarily dissolved within a heightened sense of communal consciousness. As such the festive medium undoubtedly provided and continues to provide an arena for various and extraordinary alliances, expressions and activities. But to constrain such a valuable insight within the straightjacket of social protest or control is surely to miss the point. In fact the meaning or the function of popular holiday (and the two are sometimes interchangeable) can be manifold; an issue which Brewer took up when he argued that it

is not the task of historians to legislate retrospectively on the "correct" meaning of...festivities...[for in] doing so they may well conceal the most important characteristic of the event, namely that its significance is a point of contention between groups which struggle to ascribe their meaning to the event at the expense of any competing interpretation.[19]

That is a view with which I wholeheartedly concur.

The organisation and direction of any thesis necessarily owes a great deal to the works which have preceded it. In that respect this work is no exception. It will, however, be distinctive in at least two ways. Firstly it is a contextual study; an examination of rejoicing and ritual within two particular, but not as the showcasing of the and of public festivity
19. Brewer, Op Cit, p 11.

always totally contrasting, communities. Within this framework the primary subject matter will be looked at in relation to the most immediate social, political and economic structures, although a due regard will also be paid to key developments of national or even international consequence. This more balanced approach will hopefully facilitate the effective use both of the inside knowledge of the local historian as well as the comparative perspective of the generalist. As a result this thesis should be able to shed new or, at least, stronger light on the nature and the social meaning of public festivity in early modern England.

Secondly this is an urban study. While this will not make it unique, it will place it among a disappointingly small category of similar works. For whatever the merits of Malcolmson and Bushaway their investigations, purportedly national in extent, are decidedly, if not completely, rural in orientation. The only truly urban study of rejoicing and ritual, per se, is that of Charles Phythian-Adams, although that is for an earlier period.

Urban and contextual, this thesis will necessarily be concerned with many of the most dynamic and fundamental of the developments to affect late eighteenth and early nineteenth century English society, in general, and rejoicing and ritual, in particular. This is, of course, entirely appropriate. Nevertheless there are dangers to such an approach, the most obvious being a tendency towards teleology; assuming too much too early about the changing nature and form of public festivity

and, in doing so, obscuring important elements of continuity. In order to compensate for such an unwelcome trend, the first part of this thesis will be spent looking at rejoicing and ritual at Norwich and Coventry during the late seventeenth and eighteenth century; that is before the growing tension between what I shall call the "polite" and "plebeian" cultures had manifested itself in relation to it. Thus, after a first chapter introducing the social, economic and political context of the study the thesis will move on in chapters two and three to a fairly descriptive account of the communal holiday calendar (the occasion for much of our subject matter) as it existed in the two cities at or about 1750. Chapter two will concentrate on those annual holidays which were common to both Norwich and Coventry, and most other English cities, while chapter three will look at those events which were particular to each community because of their specific economy, topography or history. These two chapters together will give some idea of both the unity and the variety which existed in the festive life of early modern England.

Of course not all rejoicing and ritual took place within the confines of the communal holiday calendar. There were other forms of festivity which were exclusive to particular groups, as well as celebrations of a national nature (for the declaration of war, the conclusion of peace or the coronation of a new monarch, for example) which only took place on an occasional or an extraordinary basis. All, however, took place within an institutional framework; for even the most apparently

eighteenth century that the economic potential of public festivity was fully exploited. Chapter five will look at who exploited it, how and why. Such an approach is radically different from that taken by many before who have preferred to view rejoicing and ritual purely as an economic liability. In doing so they have increased the tendency towards teleology and crass determinism which has infected so much of the work on popular culture in the century preceeding the Industrial Revolution.

Chapters six and seven will go on to look at the second major force affecting the conduct of rejoicing and ritual; politics. We have already noted the work done on the relationship between political change and public festivity by historians like Brewer and Cannadine in recent years. Their studies have been complimented by the work of several sociologists, none moreso than that of Steven Lukes.[20] Taking his work into particular account these chapters will examine the exploitation of the festive medium for the "mobilisation of bias" in favour of various political and dynastic groups. They will also look at the "language of the holiday crowd" and how it changed in both form and meaning, in response to shifts in political consciousness between the Restoration and the reform of the corporations in 1835.

To conclude this study at Municipal Reform is entirely appropriate. Both politically and culturally it marked the end of an era and provided the institutional break which confirmed the collapse of the ancien regime in Britain. At the local level it had many and various

20. S. Lukes, Essays in Social Theory, chapter three; "Political Ritual and Social Integration."

consequences, one of which was the disappearance or the transformation of some of the more civic elements in the festive repertoire of both Norwich and Coventry. The passage of the measure itself was accompanied by great optimism for a better, a more civilised, and, crucially, a more respectable society.

Of course Municipal Reform was, itself, the product of social and cultural change. Indeed it can be profitably interpreted as a reflection and an extension of a divergence between a novel polite and a traditional plebeian cultures; the third of the forces which fundamentally changed both the conduct and the context of rejoicing and ritual. Peter Burke characterised that divergence as the withdrawal of an elite from the culture of the masses. He went on to record its particular affects in English society. Chapter eight will begin by looking at these in greater depth and will proceed to examine the very different nature, pace and extent of that process in Norwich and Coventry, looking in particular at the consequences for public festivity. In doing so it will hopefully make some contribution to the investigation and the comprehension of cultural change in early modern England.

The third and final part of the thesis will examine many of the themes developed in the first two, although it will do so with specific reference to the Guild Day in Norwich and the Godiva procession in Coventry. As the highlights of their holiday calendars their development over time will illuminate and reflect many of the broader themes in the history of rejoicing

and ritual during this period. These two case studies, examining elements both of continuity and change, in the form, structure and the social meaning of two quite unique popular festivals, should also provide a welcome addition to the presently small collection of similar historical monographs.

111

In the final part of this introduction I would like to make a few comments on the sources I have used. A study of this kind is bound to have particular problems in this respect. Robert Malcolmson identified the most obvious of these when he wrote that the "most significant bibliographical feature" of his enquiry was "the lack of a well defined body of essential" primary or even secondary material. He concluded that "the sources are so scattered and fragmentary, and so thinly available in local materials" that "it is necessary to draw one's evidence from all parts of the country in order to be able to offer a reasonably thorough account of recreational life." [21]

Of course rejoicing and ritual is and was more than recreation. This may explain why in this study there have been fewer problems over the availability, if not over the essential quality, of relevant material. Indeed one of the striking things has been the sheer variety and

21. Malcolmson, Op Cit, p 3.

the quantity of the primary work that has had to be done for a satisfactory picture of the festive repertoires of Norwich and Coventry during such an extensive period to emerge; newspapers, diaries, miscellaneous jottings, judicial and corporate records are only the most significant of the sources examined and, where possible, exploited.

Individually all of these sources have intrinsic problems, too familiar and too extensive to be discussed here, for the sensitive historian to counter. In general they have a bias towards either an official or an idiosyncratic point of view. Perhaps the most voluminous and the most problematic evidence of all has come from the press.[22] Both Norwich and Coventry were served by their own newspapers from an early date; indeed the former had the first ever provincial newspaper in the form of the Norwich Post which appeared in 1701. The first paper available as an historical source for the city is the Norwich Gazette (or the Weekly Protestant Packet) between 1706-12. It is available again for the 1720's, by which time it had been joined by a Whig rival in the form of the Norwich Mercury. The co-existence of these two papers is particularly important from the historical point of view during periods of intense political conflict in the city. In that context their selective use of material is transformed from an obvious historiographical liability into an active asset as an

22. For a particularly good discussion of the problems inherent in relevant sources, in general, and evidence from newspapers, in particular, see Bushaway, *Op Cit*, pp 14 - 19.

indication of how partisan the conduct, and how different the perceptions of rejoicing and ritual could be.

The first newspaper to appear in Coventry was the Jopson's Coventry Mercury which was established as a "Church and King" enterprise in 1747, that is in the immediate aftermath of the second abortive Jacobite rebellion. It too had a Whig rival for a short time in the late 1770's in the form of Piercy's Coventry Gazette. However for most of the period it had the field to itself. It used its monopoly to articulate consistently anti-Corporation sentiments both during and between the many, often violent, parliamentary elections in the city. Because of this bias the paper can be taken as a valid source only in conjunction with material of the Council; taken together they may not tell the truth, but they will present a more balanced picture of the festive life in the city, a picture which can be illustrated further by the use of other less sectarian information. The Mercury was proceeded as a historical source in the late 1820's by the Tory Herald.

Both cities, then, were served by an active and influential, if a rather biased press. However that is only true from the eighteenth, and for Coventry, from the later eighteenth century. Before that time the most accessible material is that of the two corporations; council minutes, treasurers accounts and chamberlains vouchers have all proved valuable in uncovering the mechanics and the cost of, as well as the thinking behind, public celebrations. The records of the trading companies at Coventry have also provided material in

respect of festive life during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. For Norwich, where the companies were rather less active, it is the Waste Books of the Company of St George - by far the most important festive organisation until it was disbanded in 1731 - which offers the most interesting additional material for the years preceeding the advent of the press.

Judicial records have generally proved disappointing as indicators of the festive climates of Norwich and Coventry in this period. In fact the only such material to offer any significant evidence about rejoicing and ritual has been that provided by the Mayor's Court in Norwich. It seems likely that the relative lack of evidence from other judicial sources can be explained by the generally ambivalent legal status which many activities associated with events on the holiday calendar enjoyed. For, as we shall see in chapter six, even the most subversive revellers were largely beyond the reach of the authorities who were loath to intervene against crowds who could legitimately claim the sanction of the church and state for their actions.

Diaries and memoirs were a much more fertile source of information about rejoicing and ritual in Norwich and Coventry, providing colourful, if idiosyncratic, insights into the festive life of each city. The diaries used for this thesis range from that of Robert Beake, a Puritan mayor of Coventry just before the Restoration, to that of Syllas Neville, Doctor and Republican, who was active in Norwich Society during the 1770's, while the memoirs available included that of an

Anglican vicar, Charles Hardy, on Norwich in the 1830's and that of a former Justice of the Peace in Coventry, recalling his memories of the City in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The memoirs, in particular, have to be used with care, for they often reflect past prejudices, subsequent judgements and present discontents, as much as the reality of a historical situation.

Chapter One

The Context: Norwich and Coventry from the Restoration to Municipal Reform.

In his examination of royal pageantry from 1820 to 1977 David Cannadine argued that to locate the study of ritual, or any other cultural form, within its context "is not merely to provide the historical background but to begin the process of interpretation." [1] It is with that in mind that this chapter will be devoted to looking at the economic, social and political life of Norwich and Coventry during this period; to a contrast which will identify the similarities and differences between them as well as elements of continuity and change in the history of each city. It will, however, be a selective study. Only those aspects with relevance, directly or indirectly, for the form and conduct of public festivity will be considered.

1

Perhaps the most striking contrasts between Norwich and Coventry during this period relate to their size and status. This was never more the case than at the beginning of the period when Norwich could rightly claim to be the second city of the kingdom. This was true in both demographic and economic terms. Coventry, on the

1. D. Cannadine, "The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and the Invention of Tradition c 1820-1977", in Hobsbawm and Ranger (ed), The Invention of Tradition, p 105.

other hand, ranked eighteenth in the national urban league; at least, that is, according to the hearth tax returns of 1662 which also confirmed the position of Norwich as the foremost provincial city. As time progressed the difference between the two cities in respect of their relative size and status did diminish. Nevertheless even at the end of the period Norwich still had more than double the population of Coventry.[2] Furthermore, in physical extent, the latter remained like a David to the Goliath of the former; for while, in length, the two cities were equidistant, in breadth the one and a half miles enjoyed by the citizens of Norwich dwarfed the one thousand yards available to the inhabitants of Coventry.[3]

Given such fundamental disparities it might seem strange to base a comparative study on these two cities. Yet they were similar in many respects. Both, for instance, were textile towns. Indeed, at the beginning of the period the two cities were direct competitors as the staple industry of each was the manufacture of woollen cloth. In that particular struggle Norwich won out decisively. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries its industry grew to become the cornerstone of the English cloth trade, whereas that of

2. The population of Coventry was 6,710 in 1694, 12,817 in 1748-9 and 27,000 in 1831. See B. Poole, Coventry: Its History and Antiquities, p 401, V.C.H (Warwks) Vol VIII p 3 and P. Searby, Weavers and Freemen in Coventry, 1820-1861; Social and Political Traditionalism in an Early Victorian Town (Ph.D). That of Norwich was 28,881 in 1693, 36,000 in 1752 and 61,116 in 1831. See D.J. O'Sullivan, Politics in Norwich 1701-1835, p 3, and P. Corfield, The Social and Economic History of Norwich 1650-1850, p 12.

3. R. Beatniffe, The Norfolk Tour, p 10; J. Prest, The Industrial Revolution in Coventry, p 25.

Coventry experienced continuing decline, so much so that, in the course of the eighteenth century, the manufacturing emphasis of the city shifted from the production of woollens towards the making of silk ribbon and cloth.

The woollen trade was never completely extinguished at Coventry but that it was replaced as the staple industry by the manufacture of silk is clear. By 1808 the latter employed 2,819 looms and 16,000 people in the city and neighbouring villages. Thirty years later there were nearly five thousand Coventrians involved in the manufacture and finishing of silk products. Meanwhile in Norwich the cloth industry continued to employ huge numbers; over the period as a whole about half the freemen were engaged in the trade.[4]

Of the other freemen at Norwich, half were employed in maintenance industries such as the processing of food and drink. This reflected the city's role as a major centre for services, both for its own population and for that of its large agricultural hinterland. As the period progressed the tertiary sector of the economy grew dramatically as Norwich became the undisputed capital of East Anglia.[5] This was in contrast to Coventry which, in relative terms, experienced a decline of status within its own region. During the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the city was replaced as the "centre of economic gravity" in the West Midlands by Birmingham. Nevertheless it did retain some financial,

4. Corfield, *Op Cit*, pp 40-44, 88-90, 305-6; Beatniffe, *Op Cit*, p 11; V.C.H., *Op Cit*, pp 163-7; Poole, *Op Cit*, pp 360-1; Nowell (ed), The Reader Manuscripts.
5. Corfield, *Op Cit*, pp 40-44, 124-8.

cultural and administrative functions. Among the apprenticeship records for the 1790's one can find cordwainers, tailors, bakers, perukemakers, chimney sweeps, bankers, dancing masters and medical practitioners.[6]

The existence of such a variety of occupations in Coventry indicates a diverse economic base. This was perhaps the city's major strength; for with so many services and a manufacturing sector which included the production of silk, the making of woollen cloth and, from the late eighteenth century, watchmaking, it was not affected too greatly by the vicissitudes of any one trade. This was in contrast to Norwich where complete dependence upon the woollen industry led to economic and social disaster at the end of the period. For by the later eighteenth century the once pre-eminent textile trade of the city had been undercut by the rival industry of the West Riding. Consequently it lost out in the market at home and abroad, sales dropped and, by the 1780's it was in long term decline. Although it continued for perhaps forty years to stumble "between periods of stagnation and activity", the production of woollen worsteds at Norwich was doomed. "By 1820 Rees's cyclopaedia could report that the manufacture of worsted had transferred to Yorkshire and that the manufacture of camlets, calimancoes and bombazines had disappeared from Norwich." In 1826 the textile trade of the city became

6. V.C.H., Op Cit, pp 222-4: J. Lane, Coventry Apprentices and their Masters 1781-1806, p 1X. The variety of economic activity in the city is confirmed in the "analysis by trades of the apprenticeships served by men admitted as Coventry freemen, 181-1860" in Searby, Op Cit, table 1.

depressed for the last time. From that date it ceased to play an important part in the local economy.[7]

The decline of the textile trade brought unemployment and poverty to Norwich. By 1838 over half of the 5,078 weavers still left in the city were without work. The picture was even worse in the rest of East Anglia. At the end of our period Norwich was, therefore, an impoverished island in a sea of gloom. Some relief was provided by the introduction of shoemaking to the city in the early nineteenth century and the continuing growth of the service sector, but this could not compensate for the loss of the staple industry.[8]

Coventry, in contrast, was booming at the time of Municipal Reform. Nevertheless that city too had its problems. Within the silk industry the major difficulty was overmanning. This was a consequence of the large pool of artisans available in Coventry's hinterland. Working for lower wages these rural workers effectively undercut their more highly paid urban counterparts when trade was slack. Seasonal un- or under-employment was, therefore, a characteristic of Coventry's economic life in the nineteenth century to such an extent, indeed, that in "December 1831, for example, forty five percent of the 4,461 looms in the city were idle." [9]

Even so for the greater part of the year and in most years from 1770 to 1835 the majority of the working

7. Corfield pp 45-8, 295-7, 330-1; M. Berg, The Age of Manufacture, p 115.

8. Corfield, Op Cit, p 297. These figures come from the Handloom Weavers Commission report of 1838.

9. N. Tiratsoo, Coventry's Ribbon Trade in the Mid-Victorian Period; Some Social and Economic Responses to Industrial Development and Decay (Ph.D), p 42.

population enjoyed full employment. Indeed, for the city as a whole, the major problem was not the depression of one or other of its trades but rather the restriction on further expansion imposed by the existence of nearly three thousand acres of common land around the city. Divided into three hundred acres of pasture available all the year round and Lammas/Michaelmas land accessible only in the Summer, this had once been considered an economic asset by Coventrians. In the depression of the woollen trade in the late seventeenth century, for example, the right to graze cattle on the land had provided a safety net for many who were otherwise unemployed. At that time disputes about the common land were limited to questions of access; originally available to all the inhabitants of the city this had, by the eighteenth century, been monopolised by a small group of freemen.

However by the early nineteenth century the common lands had become a liability, a bottleneck on Coventry's economic expansion. Within the city there was simply no room for further development and overcrowding was already a serious problem. The only other option was to build outside of its walls, but this was effectively prevented by the fact that to do so some of the Common, Lammas and Michaelmas pasture would have to be enclosed. Of course enclosure could only be carried out by an Act of Parliament. This was not something which those with access to the lands, the freemen, were prepared to support and since the franchise was limited to that group neither would any of the city's M.P's. Consequently

Coventry remained prosperous but incapable of further growth.[10]

11

Society

In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Norwich and Coventry had similar, fairly conventional, social structures. That of each can be represented as a pyramid made up of a large artisanal population at the base, a small elite of wealthy retailers and merchants on top, and a rather more diverse middling group in between.

In Norwich the basic shape of the social structure remained much the same for the whole of the period from the Restoration to Municipal Reform. There were changes but these concerned the relative strength and wealth of the different socio-economic groups and the quality of the relations between them rather than their composition or size.[11]

Of all the elements in Norwich's social structure it was the middling sort who enjoyed the greatest good fortune. Their wealth, power and number grew steadily after 1680 and they figured prominently in the local version of what Peter Borsay has described as the " Post-Restoration Urban Renaissance", a movement which saw the transformation of many towns and cities, in

10. Prest, *Op Cit*, pp 1X, 29: J. Gutteridge, Light and Shadows in the Life of an Artisan, pp 4-5: V.C.H, *Op Cit*, pp 199-200.

11. Corfield, *Op Cit*, pp 212-3.

the eyes of the most genteel members of society, from places of squalor and filth to centres of cultural refinement. This change in the perception of the Town was only made possible by the growth of the urban economy in the century after the Restoration, and the concentration of much of the surplus wealth created in the hands of the middling sort; for it was they who provided the momentum for many of the schemes for improving the urban landscape and the quality of life. In Norwich this involved the building of assembly rooms in 1754, the erection of a permanent purpose built theatre in 1757 and the establishment of a Triennial Musical festival, as well as many other innovations designed to make living in the city as pleasant as possible.

One of the consequences of the increased prominence of the middling sort in the life of Norwich and other cities was to make them more conscious of their position as a class. Their sense of common interest grew the more they met, something they were able to do frequently in the later eighteenth century. For in erecting a theatre, assembly rooms and in establishing events like the music festival they had created an alternative cultural infrastructure which allowed them to come together with ease and to do so, moreover, far from the intrusive gaze of the mob.[12]

The middling sort were, then, trail blazers in the formation of a class society at Norwich. Generally

12. P. Borsay, Ph.D Thesis: The English Urban Renaissance; Landscape and Leisure in the Provincial Town c1660-1770, and "The English Urban Renaissance; the development of provincial urban culture c1680-c1760" in Social History, no 5, May 1977. On the manifestations of this movement in Norwich see Beatniffe, Op Cit, pp 17-19.

their class consciousness manifested itself in positive ways, in cultural developments which contributed both to their increasing cohesiveness and to the quality of life for the citizens of Norwich as a whole. In the context of steady economic growth during much of the eighteenth century - Arthur Young called the period from 1700 to 1770 Norwich's "golden era" - that was a luxury they could well afford. Moreover even when the textile trade went into decline after 1780 they were not too badly affected; since many of their numbers worked in trades and professions which were not dependent upon the success of the woollen industry they escaped the worst consequences of its demise.[13]

For the lower orders it was a different story. They were grievously affected by the decline of the textile trade; it was, after all, their major employer. Although the impact of its failure was greatest at the end of the period when the industry all but disappeared from the city, the affects of its depression were felt over a long period of time. From the 1780's the artisans of Norwich were subject to uncertain employment and cuts in the real level of their wages. Impoverished and dependent they too developed a sense of their interests as a class in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, although their consciousness was of a very different quality than that of the middling sort. That of the working class was born not from ideas and norms derived from contact in increasingly differentiated and secure social space but rather from struggle and the

13. Beatniffe, Op Cit, p 11: Corfield, Op Cit, pp 67-71.

"sharp jostle of experience." Consequently they became defensive and resentful.[14]

The developing and often antagonistic class consciousness of the lower, middling and, indeed, of the upper sort in Norwich during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could only lead to the polarisation of local society. This was most apparent in the late 1820's and early 1830's, and is illustrated well by the campaign to reform the system for the relief of the poor.

Since 1712 this had been run by a Court of Guardians, appointed by the Corporation, which concentrated its efforts on outdoor relief. For much of the eighteenth century they had little to do; in the 1760's less than £5,000 was being spent on the poor, a small sum for a city of this size. This reflected the general prosperity of Norwich at the time. Of course after 1780 the economic outlook changed dramatically and the poor rate rose accordingly; by 1801 (in the middle of the War with France) the amount collected had risen to £20,000. The cost of poor relief continued to grow for the next quarter of a century until in 1825 it reached £50,000. By that stage it was clear that something had to be done.

The Whigs (the party of opposition in the Corporation at the time) proposed a radical solution. This involved concentrating relief in the poor house, tightening the regime therein and making the inhabitants

14. Corfield, *Op Cit*, pp 252-8; G. Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, p 35.

work for their keep. The freemen - particularly those on the margins of poverty themselves - approved and, in 1827, the Whigs were given a mandate to introduce the scheme. This they did with zeal and, it must be said, considerable success. In its first two years of operation the new system produced a saving of £20,000. The electorate were delighted and the freemen rewarded the Whigs with their votes.

Then, however, depression set in. Consequently many of the poorer ratepayers, who had been among the most enthusiastic supporters of the new system, were now unemployed and became a victim of its logic. They looked on in disbelief as, in 1830, sixty looms were moved into the workhouse; instruments of production which could only decrease their chances of finding work. A riot ensued in which many of the looms were unceremoniously thrown in the river.

It was hardly surprising, then, that in the Common Council elections of that year the poorer freemen turned against the Whigs. With shouts of "the Wall, the Wall" - a reference to the division of families by gender within the workhouse - they returned to the Tory fold.[15]

The degree of social polarisation at Norwich in the early eighteenth century, and the extent to which it was superimposed upon party politics, was quite extreme. This was not the case in Coventry where relative harmony

15. Corfield, *Op Cit*, p 598; O'Sullivan, *Op Cit*, pp 120, 183-92.

between the classes prevailed. As at Norwich the state of social relations had much to do with that of the economy.

Of course Coventry was comparatively prosperous at the time of Municipal Reform. Admittedly this had not always been so. The city had been economically depressed for much of the late seventeenth century, during the 1720's, the 1780's and in the late 1820's. Indeed it could be said that poverty was endemic. Even in 1775, a relatively good year for the economy as a whole, John Whittingham could describe the journeymen of Coventry and the surrounding villages as "desperately poor".[16]

Nevertheless when compared to Norwich the city had few real problems. One of the reasons for this was the diversity of its economic base. Another was the fact that the silk industry, the primary manufacturing activity in the city, enjoyed the benefit of protective legislation until the 1860's. This was in stark contrast to the situation of the woollen trade in Norwich which, after the repeal of the anti-calico acts in the 1770's, had to fend for itself in an often hostile market.[17]

The protection of the silk industry at Coventry from the chill winds of foreign competition gave rise to a highly regulated set of relations between masters and men. Wages were set according to a list of prices agreed between representatives of each party. This created the

16. V.C.H., Op Cit, p 223. The depression of 1828-30, brought on by the repeal of the absolute prohibition on imported silk products, was particularly bad; the "effect upon the weavers in a trade already overstocked with labour, was to plunge them into misery and destitution." Nevertheless by 1832 prosperity had returned to the local trade and from 1835 to 1850 it positively boomed. Searby, Op Cit, pp 94-103.
 17. Prest, Op Cit, p X; Corfield, Op Cit, pp 309-13.

framework for what was, in effect, a moral industrial economy; those who offered or agreed to take less than the level agreed in the List were classified as dishonourable and shunned by the community as a whole.[18]

Of course the List of Prices could only operate effectively if it retained the support of both the employers and the employees. This it did until the very end of the period.[19] Indeed the first half of the 1830's was the heyday of this system, for in those years the tightly knit organisation of the journeymen was matched by an equally close combination of masters in the Ribbon Manufacturers Association. Although the latter was disbanded in 1833 a majority of employers continued to make reference to the List of Prices when setting wages until the 1860's. As a result Coventry enjoyed comparative industrial (and social) peace until well after Municipal Reform.[20]

It was just as well that it did. For by the early nineteenth century Coventry was an extremely overcrowded city. Hemmed in by the Lammas lands and with a street plan left over from medieval times it was

18. Tiratsoo, Op Cit, p 49.

19. This is not to say that the List was impervious to slumps in the trade. Indeed before 1835 it was abandoned several times in the face of depression and/or a chronic surplus of labour. Furthermore " each successive list was lower than the last, and real earnings fell...for those working on on the same loom." Nevertheless it is true that by 1833 the List was a vital and relatively generous indicator of wages for the weavers of silk, particularly for the many who had changed " to more productive looms and so increased their earnings." Searby, Op Cit, pp 563-4.

20. Industrial disputes which did take place in Coventry were generally peaceful and characterised by highly disciplined action on the part of the weavers who were famous for their solidarity. Ibid.

composed of rows and rows of back to back tenements. Moreover there was virtually no geographical differentiation of classes in the city until the 1840's. In those circumstances conflict would have been intolerable.[21]

However the absence of class conflict at Coventry did not mean that there was no consciousness of class in the nineteenth century. Certainly among the artisans this was very strong, although it was of a highly idiosyncratic nature.

In fact the mentality which prevailed among them was more like that of a labour aristocracy than a "genuine" proletariat. This was most obviously the case among the watchmakers (who manufactured the symbol of working class prosperity in nineteenth century England) and the woolcombers who the Hammonds termed " the aristocracy of the worsted workers." [22] But it was also true of many of those in the silk industry. In that trade the prevailing consciousness owed much to the structural changes which occurred in the Napoleonic War. These were brought about by the shortage of labour and the consequent uncertainties of supply; they were initiated by the decision of buyers in London to stop dealing with

21. Prest, *Op Cit*, pp 1X, 53-4, 61. For an interesting discussion of the relationship between urban topography and class consciousness see Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, pp 113, 116. For a description of the subsequent geographical distribution of classes in the city during the 1840's see Tiratsoo, *Op Cit*, pp 6-11.

22. J.L and Barbara Hammond, The Skilled Labourer, p 153. The phrase " genuine proletariat" is derived from Engels' description of the Birmingham metal workers " small employers...[who] are neither genuine proletarians...nor genuine bourgeoisie." This is from F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844, p 198, quoted in Searby, *Op Cit*, p 572.

the increasingly unreliable merchants and purchase cloth or ribbon directly from the masters.

The first effect of this was to create a new class of merchant-manufacturers. These were known as ruthless employers who tried, but failed, to undermine the List of Prices and create a free market in wages in its stead. The second was to force a division among the journeymen between "first handers", who owned their own looms and "second handers" who, working for the merchant-manufacturers, did not.

One might have expected this to have led to a working class divided, for the want of better terms, between a lumpen proletariat and a labour aristocracy. In fact it did not. For the "first handers" outnumbered the "second handers" and consequently it was their mentality which prevailed. The transfer of their values to the working class as a whole was aided by the relative ease with which a "second hander" could move up the socio-economic scale. All one had to do to become a "first hander" was to acquire a loom.[23]

The net effect, then, of the structural changes within the silk industry was not to split the working class into two mutually antagonistic groups but rather to increase the sense of mobility and the incentive for achievement within it. Thus it was that the prevailing ideas among the artisans of Coventry were similar to that of a labour aristocracy. Perhaps the most significant feature of that ideology was the notion of independence. How valuable this was considered to be can be seen

clearly in the reaction of watchmakers in Coventry to its loss in the severe depression of 1817-18. Contrasting their present lot to the prosperous situation at the turn of the century when

persons were enabled by their skill and industry to maintain themselves and their families in a state of comfort and respectability, and to keep their own houses and pay taxes...and contribute to [those of their]... profession, who were either sick or in distress, so that it was scarcely known that any person in this trade ever applied for parochial relief

their spokesman identified the essential elements of working class independence. Now both the benefit societies of the watchmakers were in deep financial trouble and many were forced to accept relief with all the degradation and the dependence which that entailed.[24]

However prosperity soon returned to the city and the watchmakers and others were able to regain their self respect. They held on to it throughout the 1820's and 1830's despite depressions in the woollen and silk trades in 1826 and 1828 respectively. Certainly by the time of Municipal Reform the working class of Coventry was prosperous, confident and in the ascendancy within the city. This was in contrast to the situation at Norwich where much of the working class was demoralised, dependent and insecure.

24. J. Rule, The Experience of Labour in Eighteenth Century England, pp 202-3. For an insight into the nature of the ideology which prevailed even among second-hand journeymen see the auto-biography of J. Gutteridge, Op Cit.

Religion and Politics.

It may appear strange to couple religion with politics. To a historian of the nineteenth or early twentieth century it might seem more fitting to have placed an analysis of the former in the previous section on society. But, in fact, religion and politics were very closely associated in the period with which we are concerned; moreso at the beginning when England was recovering from a civil war in which the combination of these interests was only too apparent, but recognisably so even at the end when the debates over Catholic emancipation and the reform of the franchise and the corporations went hand in hand.[25]

The identification of religion with politics was particularly strong in Coventry. There, in the early eighteenth century, Dissenters made up between one quarter and forty percent of the population. More significantly they controlled the Corporation; they had done so since the Puritans took it over in the 1560's and continued to do so until the end of the eighteenth century. Members of the established church - who despite the high number of Nonconformists made up a clear majority of the inhabitants - were almost entirely

25. J. Clark, English Society 1688-1832, p 366.

excluded from political power in the city. In a peculiar inversion of the national norm it was they who were dispossessed and the Dissenters who dominated the status quo.[26]

By the 1770's this had become a cause of great bitterness among the predominantly Anglican population of the city. Indeed in 1777 a committee set up to force democracy upon a closed Corporation identified the power of the Dissenting minority over the members of the established church as the major iniquity. The feelings of the Anglican majority towards their local rulers were once again evident in the rejoicing which greeted the news of the failure of the attempt to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts in 1790.[27]

Earlier in the period there had been rather less tension between the rulers and the ruled. Indeed, in the late seventeenth century, the Dissenting governors were widely respected. During the civil war, in which Coventry played a leading role on the parliamentary side, they were able to count on the support of the great majority of the population, while in the later struggle against Charles and James II's attempts to silence actual or potential opposition to their policies the Nonconformist councillors successfully mobilised popular

26. Judith J. Hurwich, "A Fanatick Town; the political influence of Dissenters in Coventry 1660-1720", in *Midland History*, Vol IV, p 17. In the later part of the period the number of Nonconformists would have been nearer a quarter than forty percent of the population. Nevertheless in the late eighteenth century there were five Dissenting sects; the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, the Quakers, the Particular Baptists and the General Baptists. There was also a small Roman Catholic group in the city.

27. C.C.R.O Acc 142: J.C.M, March 8th 1790.

support in their favour. The Test and Corporation Acts, passed specifically to exclude Dissenters from local government, proved ineffective as even the most Conformist of the magistrates refused to implement them. In this instance royal success against the Dissenters of Coventry was only achieved after 1682 when the charter of the city, along with that of every other incorporated town, was recalled and revised to allow the King and his privy council to expel any members of the Corporation not to their taste. Both Charles and James used this power unsparingly. [30]

But their victory was short lived. In 1688 the original charter of the city was returned, James "abdicated" and William of Orange was invited to take his throne. Thereafter the Corporation was left to its own, rather suspect, devices. [28]

In Norwich the connection between religion and politics was more tenuous. Even so, at least in the seventeenth century, the two were often related. Indeed during the crisis which followed the attempt to exclude James from succeeding to his brother's throne in 1679 the identification between the two was precise. For while the Nonconformists in the city supported the attempt and were thus associated with the Whigs, the Anglicans, nailed their colours, almost exclusively, to the Tory (anti-exclusion) mast.

In the event the Whigs failed to stop James succeeding to the throne. That failure cost the Nonconformists of Norwich dear. After 1682 they were

28. V.C.H., Op Cit, pp 250-1: Hurwich, Op Cit.

subjected to religious persecution on a grand scale. Indeed by December of that year so many Norwich Quakers "were in prison that the monthly meeting had to be held in...gaol." [29] They and other Dissenters were only saved from prolonged official intolerance by the decision of James in 1687 to ditch his Tory friends and attempt an alternative alliance with Nonconformist Whigs in the hope of securing religious toleration for his fellow Catholics. Although the Dissenters of Norwich and elsewhere rejected his overtures, the attempt of James to court them did provide Nonconformity with something of a reprieve. [30]

Of course the Dissenters of Norwich were in a much more vulnerable, and a good deal less influential, position than their counterparts in Coventry. For one thing they only made up 3.5% of the population. For another they were not particularly well represented, no mind dominant, on the Corporation. Given these facts it was hardly surprising that they welcomed the Glorious Revolution with open arms. For that brought religious toleration; something which continued, more or less, until the very end of our period. [31]

Indeed, during the course of the eighteenth century, Old Dissent, in general, and Presbyterianism, in particular, became the essence of respectability. This was not, however, true of New Dissent. Methodism received

29. J. Evans, Seventeenth Century Norwich; Politics, Religion and Government, pp 269, 281-9, 292-6; M. Watts, The Dissenters, p 254.

30. Evans, *Op Cit*, pp 307, 310, 313-4.

31. O'Sullivan, *Op Cit*, pp 6-7; C.B. Jewson, The Jacobin City - A portrait of Norwich in its reaction to the French Revolution 1788-1802. There were places of worship for Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Quakers and Roman Catholics. Of the Dissenting sects the Presbyterians were the most numerous and influential.

a vitriolic reception in Norwich; the first preacher, arriving in 1751, was greeted with a riot.[32] Although Methodism did eventually take off in the city this was not until the early nineteenth century. For the rest of the eighteenth century it remained the object of both popular and official contempt.

The rest of the Dissenting population were left largely to their own devices; tolerated but not particularly well represented. Officially they were still subject to the Test and Corporation Acts; legislation which, in demanding that all local government officers take the sacrament of Communion in accordance with the Anglican Rite, effectively excluded them from power. The only way of circumventing the effect of these acts was to practice Occasional Conformity; something which was done frequently, if grudgingly, by Presbyterians in particular.

Despite the availability of Occasional Conformity as a means to political power the Test and Corporation Acts - which also included the requirement that all civic officials swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown - became an object of increasing bitterness among the Nonconformists of Norwich. They considered that the legislation - passed in the aftermath of the most bitter politico-religious strife ever to affect England - was anachronistic and insulting. It was against that background that, in 1787, the Dissenters of the city

32. O'Sullivan, Op Cit, p 94. On this occasion the Anglican Crowd delighted in cries of "Down with the Meeting House", a reference to the Presbyterians on the subsequently embarrassed Corporation.

joined with their brethren elsewhere to campaign for its repeal.

The failure to achieve that objective in 1790 led to much disillusionment in the short term; in the long term it spurred the Nonconformists of Norwich to much greater political involvement, even if that meant occasional conformity or the risk of prosecution. Thus in the last decade of the eighteenth and first decade of the nineteenth centuries the Dissenters of the city put themselves forward for election as never before. This was particularly true of the Presbyterians who, by 1818, held one quarter of the seats on the Common Council. [33]

They were helped in their rise to power by a general increase in religious fervour during the early nineteenth century. This was not unique to Norwich; indeed since the late 1780's the whole nation had undergone something of an evangelical revival after over a century in which "enthusiasm" had been deplored. But the city was in the forefront of this movement; in 1817 the Norwich Mercury reported a vast increase in the number of Dissenters, generally, and that of the Wesleyan Methodists, in particular. The established church too benefitted from this development; in September of the same year there were one thousand applicants for confirmation at the Cathedral.[34]

At Coventry there was no such rise in evangelical fervour; indeed after 1750 there was a marked decline in popular religion. This was particularly true in relation to Dissent (whether of the old or the new

33. Ibid p 121.

34. N.M Jan 4, March 1, Sept 6 1817.

variety) which with the advent of toleration after the Glorious Revolution lost a great deal of its former appeal. Consequently, as the eighteenth century progressed, Nonconformists made up a smaller and smaller proportion of the population; a development which made their position on the Corporation seem all the more untenable. By the 1790's the pressure on the Dissenters within the Council to invite Anglicans into their ranks was immense, but it was not until 1800 that they succumbed. Thereafter the Corporation included greater numbers of Conformists until, by 1835, the influence of Dissent at Coventry was certainly no greater, and possibly less, than at Norwich.[35]

Over the period as a whole, then, the relationship between religion and politics in Norwich and Coventry was a close one. But religion was not the only dynamic of political life. This was particularly true in the years following the Exclusion Crisis in the years 1679-81 when the spirit of party became a permanent, if erratic, feature of municipal and parliamentary affairs.

The ferocity of the debate between the Whigs (who had supported the attempt to exclude James from his brother's throne) and the Tories (who had opposed it) was rarely greater than during the "rage of party" which engulfed the nation in the latter part of the reign of Queen Anne. Brought on in parliament by the collapse of

35. Searby, *Op Cit*, p 29.

the Triumvirate in 1709 and fuelled by the trial of Henry Sacheverell, a Tory Anglican prelate, in the following year, this was apparent at Norwich as early as 1710. It was to continue for nearly thirty years - much longer than in the nation as a whole - reaching its peak in the second half of the 1720's. There were various reasons why the spirit of party raged at Norwich for so long. For one thing the city's relatively widespread franchise - which being available to every freeman made Norwich the third most popular constituency in the country - made it particularly prone to factionalism. For another it was the county town of Sir Robert Walpole; a jewel in his crown which he could not afford to lose to the Tories under any circumstances. [36]

In Coventry the "rage of party" was rather less apparent. This had much to do with the fact that politics in that city was vigorous anyway; a re-emergence of factionalism in the nation as a whole brought nothing extraordinary to Coventry. But it also had much to do with the closed nature of the Corporation which, as such, was beyond democratic reproach.

Nevertheless the Tories - who in 1696 had lost control of the Council to the Whigs - did their level best to stir the party pot. In 1711, for example, they attempted to prevent the inauguration of the Mayor by seizing the Sword and Mace; a symbolic act which, they hoped, would deny the Whigs the ritual legitimization

36. O'Sullivan, *Op Cit*, pp 45, 59, 62, 93; Corfield, *Thesis*, Appx 1.

which, in the absence of a democratic mandate, they so urgently required.[37]

Despite such efforts the Tories failed to make any significant impact upon the policies or the composition of the Corporation. For that body elected itself.[38] Consequently, the party with control (the Whigs) could remain in power until, by accident or design, they gave it up. This they did not do until the 1790's when, during the French Revolution, the pledge of absolute loyalty by the previously dissenting Corporation to the monarchy of George III and the government of William Pitt, placed it firmly in the Tory, establishmentarian, camp.[39]

But that would have to wait. For now, and for the greater part of the eighteenth century, the Tories were completely excluded from the municipal stage. This fact of political life had fundamental consequences for the nature of parliamentary politics in the city which, as a result, was dominated by municipal issues and alliances forged in the heat of battles for or against the Corporation. True blues were only concerned with one thing:

The very local nature of parliamentary politics in Coventry was fully apparent during the by-election of 1768. Taking place in the context of the Wilkite campaign

37. T.W. Whitley, The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry, pp 139-40.

38. The mechanics of this were quite ingenious. Every year at the Great Leet, the meeting of the body which, at least officially, still governed Coventry, a Grand Inquest made up of the Council and former officials would retire to elect the following year's officers, including the Mayor who was traditionally chosen from among those who had been Sheriff. New members for either the Aldermanic Bench or the Common Council were simply co-opted. See Hurwich, *Op Cit*, p 18.

39. Searby, *Op Cit*, pp 28-9.

it was vigorously contested, despite the fact that only one of the city's two seats was up for grabs. In a generally heightened political atmosphere the tension was increased by the recent emergence of a new style Independent movement - which, in earlier or later partisan terms, would have been classed in the Tory mould - and their invitation to Sir Richard Glyn, merchant banker and alderman of London, to represent them. Glyn took up the challenge and for several weeks the streets of Coventry rang with slogans resonant of Wilkes; "High Church, Glyn and Liberty" was the order of the day.[40]

To any observer from London the association of Glyn with Wilkes, no matter how casual, would have seemed quite perverse. For in the context of Middlesex, only a few years before, the two had been on completely the opposite sides.[41] Yet here Glyn was happily using the style of his erstwhile enemy. To explain how he could do so it is necessary to consider how particular the political constellation in which Glyn now operated was. For the Tory/Independents of Coventry (who were known locally as the True Blues) were only concerned with one thing; defeating the Corporation.[42] The rest of the Wilkite agenda - the abolition of the general warrant, the free reporting of parliament and the right of electors to have the final decision on who should represent them - did not motivate them at all. Thus Glyn could stand unabashed. In the event he won handsomely and

40. Whitley, *Op Cit*, pp 165-71.

41. G. Rude lists Glyn as a Court supporter. See Wilkes and Liberty, p 219.

42. One of the most frequently used slogans of this election was "No Corporation Slavery."

proceeded to threaten the Corporation with writs of Mandamus if it did not mend its ways.[43]

In Norwich there was more genuine support for the figure and the policies of John Wilkes. One example of the sympathy and affection in which he was held came in 1770 when, on his release from the King's Bench prison, there was a spectacular and jubilant procession of woolcombers. Within the Corporation about half of the Common Council supported him.[44]

The supporters of Wilkes became organised as the Independents. As in Coventry they were in opposition to the prevailing party on the Corporation. In Norwich this was collectively known as the Junto, a group of wealthy aldermen who effectively controlled the Corporation from 1750 to the late 1780's. But unlike their counterparts at Coventry the Independents of Norwich were more akin to radical Whigs than Tories. Furthermore they had a major stake in the Corporation which was open and subject, over the period as a whole, to regular changes in its political character. This was in sharp contrast to the situation at Coventry where the Independents derived much of their interest and motivation from their exclusion from local power.

The divisions between the Independents and the Junto became more fundamental as the 1770's progressed.

43. The writs were aimed at the long standing practice of the Corporation and, before the Coventry Elections Act of 1722, the trading companies, of granting the franchise to anybody who would support their political interests. In Law the vote was only available to those who had served an apprenticeship in the city. The illegitimate voters were known as "mushroom freemen" - a reference to their propensity to spring up during an election.

44. J. Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics in the Reign of George III, p 179; O'Sullivan, Op Cit, p 119.

Their interests finally became irreconcilable during the American War when the efforts of the North administration to crush the rebels was vigorously opposed by the Independents but supported by the Junto. As it turned out the Independents' stance on this issue reflected the feelings of many in Norwich where the war, and the American boycott which had preceded it, were held largely responsible for the economic depression of the late 1770's. The extent of support for the Independents on this matter was made apparent in 1780 when their candidate for mayor defeated that of the previously unassailable Junto.[45] Later in the 1780's, as a result, and despite the election of an Independent mayor in 1780 was more than an indication of opposition to the War; it also marked the re-emergence of fully fledged factional politics in the city which had been dormant since 1740. Of course the factions which arose at this point were of a very different sort to those which had dominated political life in the city during the 1720's and '30's. Then politics had been based on the "rage of party" between the Tories and the Whigs. Now it was more aptly characterised as a struggle between radicals and conservatives. The conflict between the two was fundamental. At no time was this clearer than during the French Revolution. Initially that event was greeted with widespread enthusiasm in Norwich. Between 1790 and 1794 the city had one of the largest Corresponding Societies in the country and the radicals, who supported the ideals

45. O'Sullivan, Op Cit, pp 110-20.

and the actions of the Jacobins with zeal, were in a clear majority in the city.

It was only after the arrest of Isaac Saint, secretary of the local Corresponding Society, in 1794, that a conservative opposition emerged and the radicals were forced to retreat. Their decline was only temporary, however, and they were able to regroup in the following year as the Patriotic Society. Their choice of title reflected their concern at the charges of treachery being thrown at them by the conservatives.

The momentum of such attacks was increased considerably in the later 1790's. As a result, and despite widespread opposition to recruiting and high food prices, the conservatives gained much political ground at Norwich. Their cause was further advanced by the growing war fever in the city after 1796 and the gradual return of prosperity. By the beginning of 1798 the radicals were once again on the defensive; within the context of the Invasion Scare it seemed dangerous even to imply criticism of local or central government.

Nevertheless the radicals were far from defeated. They re-emerged quickly in 1801 as the cease fire with France increased the hopes for and the expectations of peace. Their cause was helped by the opposition of many conservatives - particularly of William Windham, former radical, local M.P. and Secretary of State-at-War in the cabinet of William Pitt - to the subsequent Treaty of Amiens. This went down badly in a city desperately tired of the War.

The increasing strength of the radicals was confirmed in the general election of 1802 when their candidate defeated the now unpopular Windham. After 1802 the size of the anti-government (pro-peace) vote grew consistently and for the rest of the War at least one of the two M.P's returned by Norwich represented this view. Indeed there would have been two but for the emergence of a strong local candidate in the form of John Patteson, conservative, brewer, and future mayor.[46]

In Coventry the French Revolution got a far less enthusiastic reception. Although there was a large Corresponding Society in the city during the 1790's it does seem that, in general, the politics of "Church and King" prevailed. The great majority of innkeepers, the Methodists, and both political parties made a point of expressing their loyalty to the British nation-state.

If there was any enthusiasm among the inhabitants in relation to France it concerned the prosecution of the War. War fever ran particularly high in Coventry during the early 1790's. Moreover weariness with the conflict did not set in to the same extent as it did at Norwich. The contrast between the two cities in this respect owed a great deal to the different impact of the War on the local economy. For while Norwich did only tolerably well from 1800 to 1815, Coventry boomed.[47]

Radicalism did not take off in Coventry until after the Napoleonic War. The short term cause for its development thereafter was the depression which set in

46. Ibid pp 128-162.

47. Whitley, *Op Cit*, pp 210-13; Corfield, The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800, p 166.

following the Peace of Amiens. It seems that the return of the troops and the unemployment that caused led to a rather more critical evaluation of the "present happy establishment" than that which had existed before. In the long term much of the radicalism apparent among the working class in Coventry during the nineteenth century arose from the split in the journeymen between "first handers" and "second handers". The overwhelming predominance of values associated with the former was the main factor in the shift away from the politics of "Church and King" espoused by many artisans before and during the War.

The radicalism which took its place led, in party terms, to support for the Whigs. This was certainly true after Reform when the voters of the city - alienated both by the Tories support of protectionist, high food price, policies for agriculture and their belief in a society based on deference and dependence - consistently returned Radical or Liberal M.P's until 1867. But it was increasingly the case before it as well. Indeed during the great debate over Reform the freemen of the city showed themselves to be unequivocally behind the proposed changes, and candidates supporting the measures were returned in 1832 and 1835.[48] On the latter occasion a decisive factor in the voters' choice was the long standing antipathy to the policies and the anti-democratic nature of the closed Corporation.

In Norwich, where the Corporation was both open and democratic, opinion was rather more divided. At least

48. Prest, Op Cit, p 29.

this was true in relation to Municipal Reform; the liberalisation of the franchise three years before had been generally welcomed by the freemen of the city. Of course when it came to the plans to dissolve the Council, the Tories had an obvious interest in opposing it. For having been elected to power in 1830 (following the backlash against the Whigs over the system for relieving the poor) they were loath to give it up. Consequently they did everything in their power to oppose the passage of the Bill. Within the city they sought to mobilise the opinion of the electorate against it, while in the nation at large they attempted to provide the lead for their fellow corporations to oppose it and launched a unilateral lobby of the House of Lords to that end. As a result of their efforts, and with the working class giving the Tories their undivided support, the debate over Reform was particularly divisive. By the end of 1835 Norwich was divided as never before.[49]

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In conclusion it is appropriate to isolate one predominant difference between Norwich and Coventry; that is the relatively polarised nature of the former when compared to the latter at the end of the period. This was true of social, economic and political life. As we shall see this would play a major part in determining the ultimate fate of rejoicing and ritual in each city. There were, of course, other differences between Norwich and

49. O'Sullivan, *Op Cit*, pp 192-200.

Coventry in this period; topography, size, status and occupational structure to name but a few. All of these had an impact on the shape and composition of their respective festive repertoires. This point will be made clear in chapter three when we look at those holidays which were peculiar to each city. In the next chapter, however, we will be concerned with customs in common; festivities which Norwich, Coventry and most other English towns and cities shared.

Chapter Two.

The Shared Holiday Calendar

The majority of popular rejoicing and public ritual in eighteenth century England took place in the context of the holiday calendar. The annual events which made up that calendar were eclectic in origin and diverse in nature. The Church, the Law, the Royal Family, municipal government and seasonal change all generated some rejoicing and ritual.

In examining the popular holiday calendar of the eighteenth century social historians have re-discovered its local and geographically differentiated nature. Bob Bushaway has written that it is only

the practice of the antiquary and the folklorist of collecting material from widely scattered locations [which] has destroyed its local basis, by implying a wider, more national, or at least regional calendar than was the case.[1]

Certainly the holiday calendars of Norwich and Coventry reflect such localism. Differences in the festive life of each city arose from their specific topography, functions and their status in the nation-state. In chapter three we will examine the events which were particular to each city.

In this chapter, however, I want to look at those anniversaries which were observed in both cities. In doing so I want to suggest that there was a national

1. Bob Bushaway, By Rite, p35.

urban holiday calendar made up of events which were celebrated in most, if not all, the towns and cities of the kingdom. These holidays commemorated highlights in the life of the Church and the State, the only truly national institutions that existed.

In the following examination of this shared holiday calendar it will not be possible to create two neat functional categories, one for ecclesiastical, the other for state celebrations. Church and State were inextricably linked in eighteenth century English society. Historically this unity sprang from the Reformation, but it was consolidated by the restoration of Charles II in 1660 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The mutual nature of these two institutions was reflected in the festivity they provoked and sanctioned. While rejoicings which characterised anniversaries dear to the State were legitimated by the rituals of the Church, ecclesiastical celebrations were given pomp and circumstance by the participation of the State or its local representatives.

The most popular and extensive holiday on the English calendar took place at Christmas time. The festivities took place over twelve days, beginning on Christmas Day and ending on January 6th, the feast of the Epiphany. Localities diverged in the emphasis they gave to the different feasts within this period, although, in general, it was a time for protracted rejoicing throughout England.[2]

Because of the private and domestic nature of the festivities at Christmas the scanty evidence of its celebration in Norwich and Coventry is disproportionate to its importance. There was, however, a public as well as a private side to the seasonal joy. In Norwich, Christmas time was second only to the Guild Day in providing an occasion for exhibitions and shows. In 1730, for example, Karby's Puppet Show could be seen at the King's Head. Advertised as a "medley of entertainments", it boasted a magician, a sword dancer, an acrobat, royal leopards from Turkey, and an Egyptian night-walker from the East Indies, among its many attractions. In 1753 a wax-works could be seen at the Castle in the market place "during the time of the holidays." The festive hurry was given added impetus by the city bell-ringer who created verses specifically for Christmas and the New Year.[3]

Attendance at Church was the major public activity on Christmas Day. The Mayor and aldermen attended the cathedral during the morning dressed in their scarlet robes, while the county militia, when quartered in Norwich, did their religious duty at the church of St Peter Mancroft. In 1826 St Peter's was crowded in the morning for divine service and, in the afternoon, for a performance of Handel's Messiah. On the same day the Calvert Wesleyan chapel was filled to capacity by five o'clock in the morning, after which over one thousand people had to be turned away and even the Catholic Mass at St John Maddermarket was celebrated in

3.N.M., Dec 30 1730. Jan 6 1753: Copy of Verses presented by the Norwich Bellman (N.N.R.O MS 453 T133A.)

front of " a numerous congregation." Music provided one of the biggest attractions to Church at Christmas. In 1783, for example, a Christmas Day anthem was sung at St John's in Coventry, by the charity children of that parish.[4]

Until the change to the Gregorian calendar in 1752 the year began on March 25th (Lady Day). The first of January was the feast of the circumcision but it was not recognised as a popular holiday. Once the calendrical change did occur, however, New Year's Day quickly established itself in the popular festive repertoire. The giving of Godcakes was a custom peculiar to Coventry on this day. These were triangular mince pies, costing from a penny to a pound, which were given by sponsors to their god-children. The custom developed until, by the nineteenth century, it was something akin to the consumption of hot-cross buns on Good Friday. As with hot cross buns the cheaper variety were hawked about the streets.[5]

Like Christmas, New year was a time for conspicuous consumption. In Coventry, the True Blues had their annual dinner on New Year's Day, while in Norwich, Alderman Ives gave an annual dinner of roast beef and plum pudding to the children of the Sunday school in his parish. It was also a time for ritual merriment. There must have been many, like Parson Woodforde in 1780, who sat up with family and servants to see the New Year in.

4. N.M., Jan 1 1774, Jan 2 1779, Dec 29 1810, Dec 30 1826: F. Blomefield, Essay on the Topography of Norfolk, p 443: J.C.M. Dec 22 1783.
5. A.R.Wright and T.E.Lones (ed), British Calendar Customs, Vol 11 p 28.

In 1822 John Bilby, sometime secretary of the Musical Sons of Good Humour and alehouse keeper in Norwich, enjoyed the company of his friends with whom he had " a good frolic with egg flip on December 31st to finish the old year out and welcome the New Year in." [6]

The major festival after Christmas and the New Year was the martyrdom of Charles I on January 30th. This was the first of four dates upon which successive monarchs appointed divine service to be read throughout the established church, the others being the anniversaries of the restoration of Charles II in 1660, the discovery of the Gunpowder plot in 1605 and the monarch's own accession. As we will see each had strong political overtones and all were used in the political struggle in the fifty years which followed the Glorious Revolution. Solemn fasting, not popular rejoicing, characterised the anniversary of the Martyrdom. In Norwich, during the first half of the eighteenth century, the day was marked by almost total inactivity; markets were postponed, shops shut, and people prohibited from driving carts around the streets of the city. [7]

The central ritual of the day was the performance of divine service. [8] The sermons, on these occasions, were highly political. Reflections on the regicide and the implicit challenge to the notion of the divine right of kings which was involved had strong contemporary resonance in the seventeenth and early

6. J.C.M Jan 11 1779: N.M Jan 5 1793: John Bilby's Autobiography, (N.N.R.O MC 27/2).

7. M.C.B, 29 Jan 1695, 24 Jan 1729.

8. In Norwich the funereal atmosphere was added to by the black robes of the Mayor, sheriffs and aldermen as they processed towards the cathedral to hear the service.

eighteenth centuries. As Dr Clark has recently illustrated, much political discourse in these years took the form of discussions about the concept and the application of divine right.[9] That discourse was periodically enlivened by the dynastic challenges which took place in England from the Restoration, through the Exclusion Crisis, the Glorious Revolution, the Jacobite rebellion and accession of the Hanoverians in 1715-16, up until the final victory over the Stuarts and their followers at the battle of Culloden in 1746. The question of divine right and the legitimacy of the Hanoverians did not disappear from the political agenda until the accession of George III in 1760.[10] It is not surprising, therefore, that the celebration of the anniversary of the Martyrdom provoked strong feelings and, sometimes, outright opposition. As late as 1771 Syllas Neville wrote in his diary that

This being the anniversary of the deserved death of Charles I, messrs Whiteside, R. Barber and J. Bell dined with me on calf's head etc. Doubtless whether Whiteside would come on this occasion as he is rather of what are called moderate principles...I happened to make a confession which was much liked; it was that the two universities are like the present government, very expensive and very useless. In the evening fired off some fireworks in the South Garden and some on the pond.[11]

9. Dr J.C.D Clark, English Society 1688-1832, pp 158-9.

10. Ibid p 185.

11. Basil Cozens-Hardy (ed), The Diary of Syllas Neville, p 90.

Few, as the entry itself suggests, took such an extreme antipathy to the occasion. Yet, in the eyes of many, it was an anniversary of dubious virtue. In 1747, just one year after the final defeat of the Jacobites, a correspondent writing to the Norwich Gazette hinted at the extent and the grounds of such feeling. While expressing little surprise at the attitude of the press to this anniversary his main target of criticism was the clergy. He lamented the fact that "there are *some* (though I hope not many) among the *sacred order* who inveigh against the solemnity of the day, cry it up as a fast for strife and wish the observation abolished." Still others, he noted, sought to "extenuate the guilt of that damnable fact" by arguing that there were faults on both sides, while more agreed with them but lacked the courage to articulate their feelings. Finally he rebuked those men of the cloth who refrained from attacking the rebellion which led to regicide "lest they should be supposed to make an oblique reflection on the Glorious Revolution." He concluded by demanding an end to this shameful neglect of duty; with a monarch on the throne who was virtuous, religious, and, moreover, legitimated by "hereditary right", there could be no reasonable excuse for not supporting the celebration of this anniversary. [12]

Divine service was, of course, also performed in the Anglican churches of Coventry. Apart from this, however, there is no evidence, either in the Corporation minutes or the newspapers, of any attempt to mark the

12. Norwich Gazette Jan 31 1747.

anniversary in a special way. It may be that no evidence survives or has come to light and that it was as strictly observed in Coventry as it was in Norwich. But it may also be the case that the magistrates of the city were not particularly concerned to mourn the death of Charles I. As we have seen in the introduction the history of the city's relations with the House of Stuart provide good reason why this should be so. The city was at the forefront of the puritan rebellion in the 1640's and, indeed, one of the regicides was Colonel William Purefoy, city Recorder and, sometime, Member of Parliament for Coventry. The relationship between Coventry and the later Stuarts was little better; the large number of Nonconformists in the city reacted strongly to the attempt of Charles II to exclude them from political life and the assault by both him and his brother, later James II, on the city's autonomy. Indifference, if not hostility, to the anniversary of the Martyrdom, would, therefore, be both understandable, and, in the light of the relatively large Nonconformist population in the eighteenth century city, likely. [13]

With the defeat of the '45 and the accession of George III the political climate in the country changed. As the years passed and the debates over divine right and the legitimacy of the Hanoverians lost their urgency, the anniversary of the Martyrdom lost its contemporary significance. King George III never attended divine service on the 30th of January, and, although the form for that service remained in the Book of Common prayer

13. Whitley, The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry, p 91.

until 1859, the anniversary of the Martyrdom slipped out of the provincial holiday calendar. In the city of Norwich it ceased to be observed in a major way in the late 1770's.[14]

The anniversary of the restoration of Charles II, on May 29th, had equally strong political connotations. In celebrating the return of the Stuarts the event became a focus for popular Jacobitism in the sixty years following the Glorious Revolution.[15] Like the anniversary of the Martyrdom, the anniversary of the Restoration declined in popularity after 1745, although not to the same extent.

At the heart of the celebrations in Norwich, Coventry and elsewhere, was divine service. As with the Martyrdom, this provided a platform for contemporary political comment. In 1734, for example, the Mayor and aldermen of Norwich proceeded in their scarlet and violet robes to the cathedral where they heard a sermon in which the preacher compared the happy deliverance which the event recalled with "the practice of our present malcontents and that unnatural opposition" which now existed. According to the *Mercury* it "commanded the attention even of those to whom the comparison could for

14. Clark, *Op Cit*, p 158. The form for divine service also remained for the anniversaries of the Restoration, the Gunpowder plot, and the monarch's accession.

15. One sign of the discomfort which the anniversary produced in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution is the interruption in the payment of the ringers of Holy Trinity parish in Coventry. While in 1688 they were paid two shillings as usual, no such payments were made in 1689 or 1690. By 1695, however, ringing on May 29th had resumed. I have not been able to find further examples of such an interruption in any other parish either in Norwich or Coventry.

no other reason be agreeable than for the truth and justice of it." [16]

The day was ushered in by the ringing of bells and, in Norwich, by the firing of the great guns on the Castle hill. Bell ringing was particularly appropriate on this occasion as many believed that the Restoration was the springboard for the development of campanology as one of the most popular recreations in eighteenth century English society.

Much of the ritual and symbolism which characterized the celebration of the Restoration in Norwich and Coventry involved the collection and wearing of greenery. In 1727 the Norwich festivities included "doors strown with sand, green and flowers, garlands hung up in the streets, oaken boughs set up at the doors and drolls and antick dances." [17]

In this respect the Restoration was similar to May Day. Robert Malcolmson has suggested, indeed, that the anniversary of the Restoration often replaced May Day in the festive repertoire of some localities. It is certainly true that in Norwich and Coventry, during the eighteenth century, May Day was not an important component of the holiday calendar. Other than the fact that the Mayor of Norwich was elected on the first of May, and that, in Coventry, the return of the May-poles after the Restoration was an important prelude to the lifting of the puritan inspired festive gloom, there is no evidence of popular rejoicing on that day. One possible explanation is that in an urban environment such

16. N.M., June 1st 1734.

17. N.G., June 3 1727.

a pastoral holiday had lost its relevance. In 1808 the Coventry Mercury, quoting an entry from Henry Bourne's Antiquitates Vulgares, pointed to the pagan origins of May Day and treated it as quite an alien festival.[18]

After 1750 the rejoicings in Norwich were restricted to divine service and a corporate gift to the prisoners in the city gaol. In Coventry, however, it retained a political significance, even if this was on an erratic and occasional basis. On May 29th 1780 the "true, loyal, free and independent society of True Blues" assembled at the Ram public house where over two hundred of them had dinner and drank "many loyal and constitutional toasts." At about five o'clock in the evening the company set out to parade the streets with flags and music to accompany them.[19]

A further, striking, although rather idiosyncratic, testimony to the continuing importance of this anniversary in the popular political mentality comes from the memoirs of one Mr Odell, a former Justice of the Peace in Coventry. From his childhood in the early nineteenth century he remembered "a great loyalist named William Crump" who lived in Spon Street. On the 29th of May

he would have a bower of oak branches half way across Spon Street opposite his residence,

18. Malcolmson, Op Cit, p 30.: J.C.M, May 1st 1808: Ironically May Day did become an important popular holiday in Coventry from the middle of the nineteenth century. As elsewhere the "Jack-in-the-Green" ceremonies were introduced as an occupational holiday by the chimney sweeps in the early part of the nineteenth century. The decline of the Restoration may have assisted this process. See Roy Judge, The Jack-in-the-Green - A May Day Custom, p 89.

19. J.C.M June 5 1780.

where he entertained his friends and drunk to Church and King, and if a puritan passed he would call out "who killed the King?"[20]

The anniversary of the Gunpowder plot on November 5th was one of the most explosive events on the national holiday calendar, in both a literal and a political sense. In political terms it was the one great festivity which Whig partisans felt comfortable in claiming as their own. For them the anniversary was a double celebration; firstly for the deliverance of a protestant monarch from a papist plot and, secondly, of the landing of William of Orange at Torbay on November the fourth 1688, in anticipation of the Glorious Revolution; a constitutional development for which the Whigs took full credit. In Norwich the celebrations of the day began with the ringing of bells and the firing of the great guns. In 1708 an order of the Mayor's Court stated that

Friday the 5th day of ... November being the anniversary of the horrid powder plot it is ordered that the canonier have the usual allowance of gunpowder made him for firing off the five brass guns. And that there be ringing of bells throughout the city and that the day be observed with the usual solemnity.

The formalities of the day were continued by a civic procession to the Cathedral for divine service. The celebrations ended with a bonfire and fireworks.[21]

The festivities were particularly vigorous in the early part of the eighteenth century. In 1726, for example, the Artillery Company, a local militia with

20. Jecliffe's Diary (C.C.R.O Acc 122)

21. M.C.B, Nov 3 1708: N.M, Nov 6 1725.

strong Whig connections, walked " thro' several parts of the city". Before them they carried effigies of the Pope and the Pretender. In the market place they were joined by the Mayor and aldermen " where a large bonfire was prepared for the reception of *his pageant holiness* and his *bigoted pupil* in which they made their exit, with the loud acclamation of the people." [22]

Unlike the anniversaries of the Restoration and the Martyrdom, Guy Fawkes Day, in Norwich, never lost its popularity. This was also true elsewhere. Despite the partisan claims of the Whigs this holiday had a national character far in excess of either of the other two. Most *Freeborn Englishmen* could appreciate the stroke of good fortune which had prevented the onset of the Roman Tyranny which existed elsewhere in Europe. Furthermore Bonfire Night was particularly valued because of its isolated position on the holiday calendar. As the only major national festival in the long and progressively bleak autumn season it was especially welcome.

In Coventry the celebrations were a little less boisterous. By the 1770's the Bonfire night celebrations had apparently been combined with the inauguration of the Mayor on November 1st. After the Mayor's Feast the members of the Corporation, preceded by a band of music, went to the cross in the market place where the new officers were proclaimed. In the middle of the cross there was a large bonfire, while on the top a pitch barrel was set alight. The evening concluded with toasts to the King and a large firework display. [23]

22. N.M., Nov 12 1726.

23. C.C.R.O Acc 122.

Such a festive combination clearly appealed to the rulers of the city. Not only because of the work time it saved but also because it provided one means of surrounding a potentially anarchic event with all the trappings of magistracy and civic structure.

The anniversary of the monarch's accession provided the fourth occasion for a royally appointed divine service. This holiday was observed in both Norwich and Coventry by the ringing of bells, firing of guns and the distribution of drink to toast the King or Queen's health.[24] Of all the days for divine service the accession attracted the least sectarianism. The partisan feeling that did emerge was limited to the use of particular alehouses by different factions. This kind of political segregation was incorporated into the civic life of Norwich by the increasing tendency, on the accession and similar anniversaries, for the Mayor and freemen's Sherrif to limit their traditional hospitality to "their friends." [25]

Of all the royal anniversaries on the holiday calendar the King's Birthday was the most popular. In Coventry bells rang all day, while any troops billeted in the city assembled to fire a volley of shots. By the reign of George III this anniversary had become the major occasion for the people of the city to show their loyalty. Because it was a display of loyalty to the person rather than the office of the monarchy, the personality and the varying popularity of the monarch

24. J.C.M. Nov 27 1777: N.M. June 12 1731.

25. N.M. June 23 1753.

clearly mattered a good deal. In Coventry the celebrations expanded as the popularity of George III grew in the aftermath of the American rebellion. In 1788, for example, the magistrates gave permission for a firework display, while in 1794 the *Mercury* could report that it was "scarcely ever celebrated with more heartfelt joy" full proof of "the attachment of a loyal and happy people to the best of sovereigns." [26]

In Norwich the event had always provided a platform for conspicuous loyalty. In 1725 the holiday was greeted by the ringing of bells and the firing of guns. At 3.p.m. the Artillery Company marched to the house of the Mayor-Elect where they were treated and drank many loyal toasts. They then proceeded to the market place where they saluted the court with three volleys and after repeating the loyal healths retired to the King's Head where they spent "the rest of the evening with triumphant mirth and loyalty." The central role of the military was once more apparent in 1752 on George II's seventieth birthday, when Lord Ancram's dragoons marched to the market place where they fired several volleys in honour of the day. The festivities concluded with a bonfire and illuminations. [27]

As in Coventry the celebrations became more elaborate after the American War. In 1790 Parson Woodforde visited Norwich to participate in the celebrations. After watching the Corporation process to the Cathedral in full civic dress, he spent lunchtime in

26. J.C.M. June 10 1776, June 2 1788, June 9 1794:

J.H.Plumb, *The First Four Georges*, pp 137-8

27. *The Weekly Mercury*, May 29 1725: N.M Nov 11 1752.

the market place where he observed the Light Dragoons doing their drill. In the evening Woodforde accompanied his niece to Bonn's Gardens where they heard a concert and saw some fireworks. In 1795 Coe's Gardens were "throng'd with spectators" eager to observe the subscription dinner which had been organised for the troops recently returned from the continent, while in 1826 the crowd was so dense in the market place that the military manoeuvres had to be confined to marching in file and in threes. [28]

Just as popular, and far less susceptible to official control, was Shrove Tuesday. This was the most international event on the holiday calendar. In Catholic countries it was the climax of the carnival season which stretched from late December or early January to the beginning of Lent. It was the day before Ash Wednesday and, as such, provided the final opportunity for excess before forty days of Lenten denial. Although in the Protestant English context it had lost much of its pre-Reformation status, it remained a time for recreation and indulgence. In the seventeenth century one English writer described it as a time of

such boiling and broiling, such roasting and toasting, such stewing and brewing, such baking, frying, mincing, cutting, carving, devouring, and gorbellied gourmandising, that a man would think people did take in two months provision at once into their paunches, or did ballast their bellies with meat for a voyage to Constantinople or the West Indies.[29]

28. John Beresford (ed), The Diary of a Country Parson June 4 1790, June 4 1795: N.M. June 6 1795.

29. J. Taylor, "Jack a Lent" in his Works (London 1630) p 115 quoted in Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, p 183.

In Norwich and Coventry the day was characterised by similar gastronomic excess. In 1685, during the time of the general election at Coventry, one of the candidates took the opportunity provided by Shrove Tuesday to send his friends forty pounds to lubricate their festivities. On Shrove Tuesday in Norwich the bakers cooked sweet cakes and buns called coquilles. The latter were like large pancakes which were sold for a penny each.[30]

It was also a traditional day for sport. In this respect it was very much a holiday for the young and was particularly favoured by apprentices. A butcher's and a blacksmith's apprentice took part in a Shrove Tuesday foot race at Coventry in 1791. For a wager of ten guineas they ran twice around Cheylesmore Park. Cock-throwing was the favourite shrove-tide sport. During the early nineteenth century it was still being practiced in "windmill field" near Spon End in Coventry, and, in Norwich, it took place in the market-place and other open spaces in the city. [31]

In marked contrast to the excesses of Shrove Tuesday, Good Friday was meant for contemplation. Along with the anniversary of the Martyrdom it was one of only

30. C.S.P.D. 1685 no 319: Arderon Mss " Signs for alehouses...and particular customs." (Coleman & Rye N728.5)

31. Historical Notes of a Coventry Man. (C.C.R.O A. 128): C.C.R.O Acc 122: N.G. Feb 10 1753: Malcolmson, Op cit, pp 28-9, 48. On opposition to cock-throwing see chapter eight. There is no evidence, for either Norwich or Coventry, that football was played on Shrove Tuesday. That is surprising because, together with cock-throwing, this was the most popular shrove-tide sport. However, as with many other calendar customs, lack of evidence should not lead us to the conclusion that it did not take place.

two fast days on the holiday calendar. It was meant to operate on similar lines; shops were to be shut, church attended and movement kept to a minimum. There is more than a hint, however, that it was not observed to the extent intended. This is particularly true of Coventry. In 1763 the magistrates of that city were "publicly requested to suffer the feast of Good Friday to be observed here with the [same] solemnity as any other day enjoined by authority," while in 1776 a correspondent, observing the preparations for the forthcoming fast in thanksgiving for the victory at New York, reminded the magistrates "of a Annual Solemnity of the same nature which it would at least equally become them to take the like timely notice." [32] More attention was paid to Good Friday in Norwich. In 1788, for example, the Mercury reported that "all the shops in this city were shut up, divine service was performed at several of the churches, and the day throughout observed with decency and devotion." Even here, however, there is a suggestion that observation was lax in certain quarters. In 1797 the Mayor's Court ordered that "Good Friday should be kept with the same devotion and decorum as in London and other large places" and did "earnestly recommend to the inhabitants to have their shops shut on that solemn fast day." The experience of Parson Woodforde of Weston Longueville, just nine miles from Norwich, substantiates the suspicion that Good Friday was widely ignored. On March 23rd 1777 he "gave notice this morning at church that there would

32. J.C.M. March 14 1763, Dec 9 1776.

be prayers on ...Good Friday - there used to be none that day which I think was very wrong." [33]

There are several good reasons why Good Friday may not have been observed with the desired vigour. The first is peculiar to Coventry. In a Nonconformist city run by Nonconformist magistrates there would have been little concern to celebrate, what was after all, primarily a feast of the established church. The second and most important reason concerns the disengagement of the Anglican church from the popular holiday calendar. This was part of a wider breach between the parson and the poor. In explaining that breach Edward Thompson has written of how the Reformation and the Restoration combined to weaken the links between the established church and the population at large. As a direct result of this "the church lost command over the "leisure" of the poor, their feasts and festivals, and with this over a large area of plebeian culture." [34]

Although the Church was one of the two great national institutions which supported the shared urban calendar the proportion and nature of its involvement was strictly limited. Apart from Christmas and Easter there were no popular religious festivals on the national holiday calendar. In the early eighteenth century the core of the urban festive year was made up of anniversaries which commemorated important events in the development of the nation-state; the Martyrdom, the Restoration, the Accession and the Gunpowder plot. The

33. N.M. March 23 1788: M.C.B April 1 1797: Beresford, Op Cit, March 23rd 1777.

34. Edward Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture." in Journal of Social History, no 7 p 391.

established church, by means of divine service, helped to legitimate these celebrations, it did not initiate them. They were primarily political events and the sermons preached on these occasions used a religious text to reflect on the fate of Kings and the folly of rebellion.

The disengagement of the Church from popular culture will also be apparent when we come to look at the institutional context of the holiday calendar in Norwich and Coventry. It was not the parish but, rather, trading companies and friendly societies which, increasingly, provided the organisational backbone of urban culture.[35]

Because the Church played such a limited and subsidiary role in the popular holiday calendar it is not surprising that an event like Good Friday, which stood solely on its religious credentials, should be ignored by many. In Catholic Europe the Church presented the holiday calendar as a package; a package, moreover, in which popular rejoicing easily outweighed public solemnity. In return the Church expected obedience. In the context of the holiday calendar this meant one must fast as well as feast. The English Church, having forsaken the chains of Puritanism, and with nothing more positive to put in their place, could not demand such a sacrifice.

The third explanation for the apparent failure of some to respect Good Friday is the most banal. People simply do not like fasting. In the absence of any systematic attack upon the popular holiday calendar in

35. The lack of parish wakes, in either Norwich or Coventry, makes this point particularly significant in the local context.

the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was those holidays which lacked popularity, even though they retained official backing, which declined.[36]

Within the Church's diminished festive portfolio Easter was easily the highlight of the ecclesiastical year. Moreover while Easter Sunday was reserved for religious duty, the following Monday and Tuesday were characterised by great and varied popular rejoicing. In Norwich the focus of much of the holiday fun was Tombland fair which we will examine in the next chapter. Nationally the Easter period was a favourite time for fairs; 63 of the 113 English and Welsh fairs which William Owen, in the middle of the eighteenth century, identified in the week before and after Easter, took place on the Monday and Tuesday following the feast. One practice of the country folk who flocked to Tombland fair was particularly seasonal. Their purchase of new hats to use on Easter Sunday reflects the more widespread custom of wearing new apparel on that day.[37]

At Norwich Easter Monday was a day for theatre. In 1753, for example, "The foundling" and "Don Quixote in England" were performed at the White Swan. Theatre of a different kind was provided by the annual procession of the Mayor, sherrifs and the Blue Coat boys to Christ Church where a sermon was preached by the Bishop and followed by dinner at the Mansion House. There were also a variety of less formal amusements. In 1707, for

36. The Martyrdom, for example, declined much faster than any of the other holidays characterised by divine service.

37. Malcolmson, Op Cit, p 29: Wright and Lones, Vol? p 101

example, a billiards match was advertised for Easter Tuesday.[38]

The evidence for Easter rejoicings in Coventry is both fascinating and tenuous. The custom of Easter Heaving may have been practiced in the city during the eighteenth century. In John Brand's Observations on Popular Antiquities (1777) a "Warwickshire Correspondent" wrote that

Easter Monday and Tuesday were known by the name of heaving days, because on the former day it was customary for men to heave and kiss the women, and on the latter for the women to retaliate on the men. The women's heaving day was the most amusing. Many a time I have passed along the streets inhabited by the lower orders of the people, and seen parties of jolly matrons assembled round tables on which stood a foaming tankard of ale. There they sat in all the pride of absolute sovereignty, and woe to the luckless man that dared to invade their prerogatives! As sure as he was... heaved [he was]... kissed and compelled to pay six pence for "leave and licence" to depart.[39]

Bob Bushaway has identified similar customs at Wolverhampton and at Ludlow in Shropshire. He has rightly stressed "the elements of status reversal and sexual threat" which characterised this activity.[40]

Easter Heaving is only one example of a whole genre of popular holiday in which role-reversal played an important part. A closely related historical antecedent to heaving in Coventry was "hocking" which was similar to the custom described in Brand. This took place in the context of the Hock Tuesday pageants for which Coventry

38. N.M. April 14 1753, March 8 1707.

39. John Brand, Observations on Popular Antiquities, p 183.

40. Bushaway, *Op Cit*, pp 172-4.

was particularly famous during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Performed on the Tuesday following the second Sunday after Easter, the plays celebrated a legendary victory of English women over eleventh century Danish invaders. Both Hock Tuesday and Easter Heaving provided a temporary licence for women to be unruly and to invert the normal relations of sexual power. [41]

We will return to the issue of popular rejoicing and sexual role reversal in chapter ten which deals with the social meaning of the Godiva procession. For now, however, it is necessary to show a good deal of caution about the evidence for Easter Heaving in Coventry. It is, after all, confined to one anonymous statement about a custom in Warwickshire and even though there is a clear suggestion that this was an urban custom we cannot be sure that it was practiced in Coventry. But it is of interest nevertheless.

More certain, if rather less spectacular is the evidence about the festivities at Whit. Whit week was one of the few extended holiday periods on the calendar. It is, therefore, all the more surprising that the evidence for Whitsuntide activities in Norwich and Coventry is so sparse. This may be because Whit was a predominantly rural festival. Certainly that is suggested by the remarks of the Norwich Mercury in 1824 that "the festivities of Whitsuntide have been much enjoyed this year in the country, chiefly on account of an increasing spirit of satisfaction in the delights of peace and stability." Five years previously the paper had indicated

41. Charles Phythian-Adams, *Op Cit*, pp 66-7.

that in many Norfolk towns the "ancient national sports", associated with the time of year, had undergone something of a revival. It was events outside of Norwich which grabbed the paper's attention; a wrestling match at Blofield Grove, Donkey racing at South Walsham and jumping in sacks at Costessy. Within the city the only activities reported were pedestrian and sailing competitions. In 1832 the Mercury confirmed the picture of a festival which was overbearingly rural. Reporting whitsun ales and pastimes at "Drayton, Catton, Thorpe, and indeed on every side of the city" it was not surprised to find that, at a camping match held on the city cricket ground on Tuesday, there was only a "tolerably full attendance." [42]

In 1762, in Coventry, a concert and a ball were arranged at the Draper's Hall for Whit Monday, while on that day in 1779, the subscribers of a new bowling green met at the Navigation coffee house for a dinner to celebrate its opening. This is obviously very limited evidence. There were two particular reasons why Whitsuntide had a low profile in Norwich and Coventry, both relate to other holiday events. Firstly there were important events outside of each city during Whit week. Just outside Norwich, at Costessy, they had a highly popular mock-mayor making ceremony on Whit Tuesday, while only a short distance from Coventry at Hinkley in Leicestershire, there was a show fair on Whit Monday. Both events would have attracted large numbers from their respective urban neighbours. Secondly Whit week came only

a short time before the major annual holidays of both Norwich and Coventry; the Guild Day was on the third Tuesday of June, while the Godiva Procession took place on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday, just ten days after Whit Sunday. Since there were only limited festive resources it is not surprising that Whit had to take a relatively minor position in the holiday calendar of each city.

There were, then, a number of popular holidays celebrated in both Norwich and Coventry. The occasions for rejoicing and ritual described above were not, however, unique to these two cities. They provided the substance of a national urban holiday calendar. While both the Church and the State formed the institutional backbone of that calendar, it was the anniversaries which marked important points in the development of the State and the lives of its personal representatives which formed the core of the urban ceremonial year in the period from the Restoration to the Reform of the Corporations. As we will see the development of a predominantly political holiday calendar would have important consequences for the conduct and content of popular rejoicing and public ritual during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as both sectional and national interests sought to capture particular occasions of popular festivity for their own use. In chapters six and seven we will examine the political utility of rejoicing and ritual. For now, however, let us turn to those popular holidays which were peculiar to each of the two cities we are studying.

Chapter Three.

A tale of two cities; the local holiday calendars of Coventry and Norwich 1660-1835.

In addition to the shared holiday calendar there were a number of festivities which were particular, if not unique, to Norwich and Coventry; holidays which resulted from the peculiar topography, politics, economics and/or history of each city. It is to this distinctive festive ensemble that we will now turn.

Coventry

Any study of popular rejoicing and public ritual in the city of Coventry must refer to the seminal study of Charles Phythian-Adams on the ceremonial calendar of that city in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In uncovering an extensive calendar of popular and civic ceremony, Dr Phythian-Adams revealed a rich variety of feasts and pageants as diverse in form and function as Hock Tuesday, May Day, Midsummer and St John's Eve, as well as the most important fixture of the ceremonial year, the Corpus Christi procession. He located his analysis of that ceremonial year in the bedrock of social structure. In simultaneously stressing the unitary and hierarchical nature of the medieval community, events like the Corpus Christi pageant

provided the central imagery for a society which perceived itself as a body; an organic mechanism in which the part and the whole were fixed and inseparable.[1]

By 1600, however, this massive repertoire of rejoicing and ritual, and, to a more limited extent, the society it represented, had disappeared. It was the triumph of Puritanism which led to the destruction of the ceremonial calendar described by Phythian-Adams. As an industrial town, Coventry provided fertile ground for Puritan ambitions. The concentration of trade and industry served to relax the social and economic chains of deference and dependence which existed in the countryside, while the manufacture of textiles, in particular, provided the mobility and economic independence which allowed radical dissent to flourish.[2]

It was in towns like Coventry that the "industrious sort...[those]...artisans and small and middling merchants who supported lecturers and puritanism generally" were to be found. In attempting to impose their will, for closely related religious and economic reasons, on the lower orders, in seeking to establish a work ethic, and in trying to assert godly and civic order, it was only to be expected that these people would turn their attention to the leisure of the poor. The

1. Charles Phythian-Adams, "Ceremony and the Citizen; the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550." in Clark and Slack (ed) English Towns in Transition. pp 63-4, 69: Mervyn James "Ritual Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town" in Past and Present no 98 pp 3-29.
2. Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism in pre-revolutionary England, pp 483 ff: M.Watts, The Dissenters, pp 353-355.

context for much of that leisure was the popular and civic holiday which Dr Phythian-Adams has described.[3]

The Puritans gained control of the Coventry corporation in the early 1560's. They moved quickly to eliminate what they saw as the most blatant occasions for plebeian disorder and immorality. It was not surprising, therefore, that, in 1561, their first target was Hock Tuesday. This popular holiday must have seemed particularly objectionable; for in ridiculing patriarchy it struck a blow at the very corner stone of Puritan teaching. Two years later the Midsummer Eve festivities were terminated, while, in 1580, the Corpus Christi pageant was performed for the last time. In 1591, a full half century before a similar instruction was given to the nation as a whole, the Council ordered that all the May-poles in the city should be removed, while in 1595 football in the streets became an imprisonable offence. Sabbatarianism was a further aspect of the harsh new cultural regime. In 1588 all sports on a Sunday were banned, and in 1605 Church attendance on the sabbath was made compulsory.

The puritan zeal of the magistrates was not, however, shared by the population as a whole. Many protested against these dour reforms. In 1575 Queen Elizabeth agreed to a petition, from the inhabitants of the city, that she order the revival of the Hock Tuesday plays, while in 1591 the council acceded to the demands of "the commons of this city" for the performance of a newly commissioned, and suitably sober, pageant on

3. Hill, *Op Cit*, p 133.

Midsummer and St Peter's Eve. In the same year they also agreed to a second, though equally temporary, revival of the Hock Tuesday plays.[4]

There was, then, a divergence of popular and elite cultures in late sixteenth century Coventry. While the populace protested vigorously at the erosion of their traditional festive repertoire, the puritan reformers retained the initiative. By 1625 the transformation of Coventry from a city famous for its pageants to a community with little in the way of a popular holiday calendar was complete. Ben Jonson wrote of the city as

A pure native bird/...and tho' his hue/ be
Coventry Blue/ yet is he undone/ by the thread
he has spun/ for since the wise town/ has let
the sports down/ of May Games and Morris/ for
which he right sorr'is/ Where their maids and
their mates/ at dancing and wakes/ had their
napkins and posies.

In 1628 the plays were said to have been "put down many years since", and in 1634 the city waits, the musical backbone of the ceremonial year were disbanded.[5]

The diary of Robert Beake, Puritan mayor in 1655-6, confirms the picture of a drab city. In his year of office the only feasts he attended were two trade feasts and the only ceremonial in which he participated was walking the city lands. Above all else his diary projects sabbatarianism and intimate cultural regulation.[6]

4. V.C.H (Warwks) Vol 8, p 217-9.

5. Ibid, pp 217-8. During the 1640's instructions for the wearing of civic dress identified the following as feast days: All Souls, Guy Fawkes, Christmas, New Year, Candlemas, Easter Sunday, Whit Sunday, Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi, and the two Great Leet Days. There is, however, no evidence of popular activity on these festivals. Phythian Adams, *Op Cit*, p 80.

6. Mss Diary of Robert Beake, (C.W.C qJN 909.6)

With the Restoration there came a complete change of cultural atmosphere. The "industrious sort" had been put back in their place and the world turned the right way up once more. In 1661, at the behest of the Mayor, maypoles returned to the city of Coventry. This marked a turning point for popular rejoicing and public ritual. The re-constitution of the holiday calendar continued through the 1660's and into the 1670's. In 1674 the city waits were restored to their former civic glory and, in 1678, the figure of Lady Godiva was added to the procession to proclaim the opening of the Trinity fair. While most of the feasts and pageants of the medieval ceremonial year did not return two, the riding of the Lammas and the mayor's inaugural feast, did. It is to these very local celebrations that I will now turn.[7]

"Riding the Lammas" was unique to Coventry and Colchester. Lammas Day was on the first of August (O.S) and was the occasion for the opening up of the Lammas lands which, in Coventry, made up the greater part of the extensive common lands which surrounded the city. By the late seventeenth century the procession which rode around these lands was made up of the Chamberlains, the two city pinners and an indeterminate number of freemen. For the purpose of completing this long perambulation in a day, the cavalcade split into two branches, one to ride the "large circuit" and the other to ride the "lesser circuit". Each procession was headed by one of the pinners who wore a white donkey jacket and sported a pink

7. Hill, *Op Cit* p 141: David Underdown, Revel, Riot, and Rebellion, p 272: V.C.H., p 219.

cockade. The day finished with a dinner provided by the Chamberlain.[8]

The major function of riding the Lammas was to re-establish the claim of the freemen and the Corporation over the territory so perambulated. In the context of the enclosure and erosion of common lands, which took place in Coventry from the late fifteenth century, this annual re-assertion of communal rights was clearly important.

Up until the late seventeenth century the riding of the Lammas was the primary focus for disputes over access to common lands. In 1495 the freemen of Coventry sought to establish their exclusive claim on those lands by prohibiting the commons of the city from participating in the procession.[9] In 1525, on "Ill Lammas Day", forty freemen were arrested after tearing down the enclosures of the rent-paying tenants which the hard-up Corporation had brought in fourteen years previously, while in 1640 the inability of the freemen to gain access to the common pasture on Lammas Day, led to a petition to parliament which resulted in the husbandmen of the city being prohibited from ploughing up the land.[10]

8. Wright and Lones, British Calendar Customs, Vol 111, p 44; Benjamin Poole, The History and Antiquities of Coventry, pp 356-7.

9. Joan Lancaster, Godiva of Coventry, p 50. In protest against this action a poem was stuck on the door of St Michael's church calling on the spirit of Lady Godiva as a counter to the increasing erosion of the inhabitants' liberties she had done so much to secure. Apart from the restrictions on popular participation in the Lammas Day celebrations, the introduction of CUSTOMS onto wool and draperies and interference with the customs surrounding the apprenticeship system were causing great discontent.

10. V.C.H p 203: Calendar of State Papers Domestic (1640-1), entry no 70 p 371.

By the late seventeenth century it was the question of access to Cheylesmore Park which was exercising the minds and the shovels of those who rode the Lammas. Granted to the inhabitants of Coventry in the mid sixteenth century by the Earl of Warwick, the park was made available for pasture from May Day to the first of August. However as a punishment for the prominent role of Coventry during the civil war, Charles I granted the lease of the park to Robert Townshend, a royal pensioner. He immediately embarked on a programme of enclosure and, in doing so, provoked great opposition from the freemen to the extent that, in 1666, the Privy Council ordered the Mayor and Corporation to ensure his "quiet enjoyment" of the land.[11]

Two years later, however, more enclosures were torn down and, on Lammas Day 1669, between six and seven hundred freemen took part in the procession in an attempt to re-assert their common privileges. Ten years later, in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, they did so rather more effectively when in January they threw Townshend's son off the park and, in March, put their cattle back on it. Although Townshend was successful in petitioning for the right to return he first had to agree to restore the common pasture rights he had attempted to eliminate.[12]

Despite some renewed conflict in the 1690's, the struggle over access to the park died away in the early eighteenth century. The question of the rights of

11. V.C.H. pp 203-4.

12. C.S.P.D. (1667-8) p 435: V.C.H. p 204: Max Beloff, Public Order and Popular Disturbances, pp 76-7.

the inhabitants at large to use Cheylesmore and the Lammas lands remained an issue but, in general, other means were found to air it. Even so it is clear that Riding the Lammas played a key role in maintaining the consciousness of the freemen in relation to their now infrequently used right of access to common pasture. In that sense the ceremony was directly responsible for perpetuating the most important barrier to realising Coventry's full economic potential in the early nineteenth century. .

Nevertheless the function of the event did change over time. Although Jospeh Gutteridge, writing in the early nineteenth century, could still point to the practice of pulling down unauthorised enclosures on the eve or the day of the Lammas riding, the event progressively took on a primarily recreational purpose, falling somewhere between a giant communal picnic and an informal race meeting. By 1829, when only four hundred freemen made use of their pasture rights on the common land, few had a material interest in the ceremony of the day. Indeed the *dislocated* neck and collar bone, the broken leg, and the dead horse which resulted from riding the Lammas in 1783, probably had more to do with the desire to anticipate and emulate the forthcoming races at Cheylesmore Park than any concerted attempt to destroy enclosures. Its diminished importance in the life of Coventrians was finally confirmed in 1858 when the Lammas lands were ridden for the last time.[13]

13. Wright and Lones, *Op Cit*, Vol 111 p 44: Sydney and Beatrice Webb, English Local Government, Vol 3 p 431n.

The Mayoral Inauguration, the second of the events remaining from the Medieval holiday calendar described by Phythian Adams, took place on the feast of All Saints, the first of November. While it remained the highlight of the civic year throughout the period its primary position in the popular holiday calendar was threatened and ultimately assumed by the development of the Godiva procession in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The Inauguration of the Mayor, of any mayor in any incorporated English town during the eighteenth century, was perhaps the most purposeful ceremony on the holiday calendar. Particularly in a closed corporation, like Coventry, the ritual and symbolism involved helped to legitimate the power and authority of the person, the office and the institution. It was the most local example of what Steven Lukes has called the "mobilisation of bias." [14]

During the seventeenth century mayor-making at Coventry also served to bolster the morale of the citizens and to temper the social, economic, political and demographic decline of this once vigorous and powerful city. In relating one account of the mayoral inauguration in 1668 a local correspondent protested that

though the citie's reputation be in its wane, we are willing to support its ancient, now dwindling grandeur, so long as we are able, and to let the world know that though inevitable fate has doomed us to contempt and poverty, yet we still retain some relics of our pristine gallantry. [15]

14. Steven Lukes, Essays in Social Theory, p 73. See chapter six for a fuller explanation of this concept.
15. C.S.P.D Nov 2nd 1667.

The inauguration took place at St Mary's Hall and was followed by the Mayor's feast. The feast was the highlight of the day. It was an expensive affair; the inability of the Corporation to provide the normal allowance of £50 in 1710, meant that no candidate would willingly come forward and that Alderman Diston, who was prevailed upon at the last minute, refused to provide a feast. The high cost resulted from the gastronomic excess which characterised the event. At John Hewitt's dinner in 1755, a total of 471 dishes were provided for 654 guests. The first course included twenty dishes of fish, eighteen fat roasted pigs, twenty geese, seven ribs of beef and thirty turkeys. The second course was equally diverse; wild fowl, raised custards, pickled sturgeon, tarts, damson dishes and apple pies were just a sample of the total fare. All this was washed down with huge quantities of claret, madeira, port, white wine, rum and brandy.[16]

The preparations for this extravaganza were extensive. Some of the girls in the City were employed in the making of corporation custards for a fortnight beforehand. On his first election as mayor John Hewitt explained that

my constant attention was taken up in this business, the sending out persons into Staffordshire, and different counties to procure game, wild fowl, fish and venison, for more than fourteen days - I had at that period set on and employed a number of persons in the manufacturing of ribbons...I sent them materials at the first hand, and established the trade on the same footing with Leek and

16. T.W.Whitley, The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry, p 137: John Hewitt, Journal, pp 24-6, 35-8.

Congleton, where I had undertakers at the same time.[17]

The Mayor's feast provided one way of ensuring the quality of the magistracy; only a man of substance could provide such hospitality. The Mayor-Elect did, however, have some support in this venture. As a sign of their respect the local gentry, farmers and townsfolk presented the new chief magistrate with a variety of gifts, according to their means. The Duke of Grafton, the city Recorder in the mid eighteenth century, traditionally provided some deer and several couples of cocks, while Lord Archer, chief among the local nobility, provided John Hewitt with some venison and fish. Slightly lower down the social scale, John Rowton of Little Ashby sent Hewitt, "an old school-fellow", a turkey "as a small token of his respect."

Reflecting their urban circumstance, local traders sent gifts of money rather than meat. Richard Jecliffe remembered how, as an apprentice, he took a gift of half a guinea from his master to the Mayor-Elect who would sit at certain times of the day to receive such offerings. Once again the value of such presents reflected the status of those sending them, and the response of the recipient was equally graded; the servants of those sending a guinea were rewarded with 2s/6d, while those bearing a quarter of that sum were given a glass of wine.[18]

17. Hewitt, Op Cit, p 32.

18. C.C.R.O Acc 122: Hewitt, Op Cit, pp 29, 38.

The guest list was both large and exclusive. In the absence of a fashionable assize, the inauguration of the Mayor provided a means for the city and county elite to get together. Writing to Lord Archer after his election, John Hewitt promised that

I shall invite none but the most respectable inhabitants, gentlemen and ladies in the city, and the noblemen and gentlemen with their ladies, in the country...[plus] those of my particular and intimate acquaintance without any party distinction whatsoever.

In addition to the feast he organised a Ball and a supper for his guests in the evening, while those staying overnight were treated to a concert at St Mary's Hall in the morning.[19]

Since, however, one of the main functions of the Inauguration was to legitimate the authority of the Mayor and Corporation in the eyes of the population at large, it was desirable that the lower orders should observe and even participate in some of the proceedings. While most of the ceremonies during the day were exclusive the evening was characterised by popular rejoicing. After dinner the Mayor and Corporation went in a torchlit procession to the cross where the officers for the forthcoming year were proclaimed. Later they emerged from the mayor's parlour to join the crowd in drinking the King's health. The bonfire, fireworks and flaming tar barrels which greeted their arrival continued until the early hours of the morning.

Richard Jecliffe maintained that these elaborate festivities came to an end in the 1780's. The violence, corruption and legal costs which had resulted from the election of 1780 led to the financial ruin of the corporation and the consequent elimination of unnecessary expenditure. The simultaneous end to the civic sponsorship of the Godiva procession provides some support for Jecliffe's opinion.[20]

Apart from the Mayoral inauguration and Riding the Lammas the only other events peculiar to the holiday calendar of Coventry were its fairs. There were five official fairs in Coventry during the eighteenth century. Of these three provided a focus for society and leisure and are, therefore, to be counted as a component of the holiday calendar. Two of these, in May and November were relatively low key affairs, lasting three days each. Nevertheless they did produce an influx of country people and county money to the city. The November fair had the additional advantage that it clashed with the Inauguration of the new Mayor. The festive spirit on these occasions was enlivened by the shows and exhibitions to be seen in the streets and inns of the city. None were greater than that which opened the aptly named "shew fair" which began on Corpus Christi Thursday and lasted for eight days. The figure of Godiva was added to the procession which opened the fair in 1678, and it was this Godiva procession which would become the most peculiar

20. C.C.R.O Acc 122: In the Corporation accounts the last payments for the Godiva procession were made in the late 1770's.

feature of the holiday calendar of Coventry, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In chapter ten I will examine the form, social meaning and historical development of this great event. For now I will turn to the popular rejoicing and public ritual which was particular to the city of Norwich.[21]

Norwich

The highlight of the popular holiday calendar in Norwich was the Guild Day. On the second Tuesday of June each year the Mayor-Elect was inaugurated with a pomp and ceremony comparable only to that of the Lord Mayor's Day in London. As with the Godiva procession in Coventry, the analysis and examination of such a central, peculiar and well-documented example of popular rejoicing and public ritual will be done in a separate chapter. For the moment, therefore, I will confine my comments to those other popular festivities which were, to some extent, particular to Norwich.

Norfolk, like most counties, had a twice yearly assize. Because of the extensive nature of the county one was held at Thetford, in the west, and the other, at Norwich, in the east. The division of the assize, or rather the commercial benefits which went with it, was a constant source of friction between the two county towns. It was only at the very end of our period, after a long

21. J.C.M. May 4 1771: Piercy's Gazette Nov 5 1778: V.C.H p.165.

and bitter campaign, that the Winter assize was transferred from Thetford to Norwich.[22]

During most of the period Norwich only hosted the Summer assize. For a week during late July or early August, the city provided a venue for the most awesome demonstration of state power in the county; Norwich acted as a stage on which the sub-plots of majesty, justice and mercy were combined in the all too serious play of property, authority and the criminal law. The week began with the entrance of the Judges. Several miles from the city their Lordships were met by the City and County sheriffs. Accompanied by a cavalcade of gentlemen they proceeded to the Castle, the headquarters of the county administration and thence to the Guild Hall, where they were met by the Mayor and aldermen. It was pure theatre and the procession was guaranteed an attentive audience; in 1772 Syllas Neville was among the crowd of people who gathered in the market place to watch them.[23]

After declaring the commissions open at the various county courts in the city, the judicial train retired to the Judges lodgings where they were attended by the Lord Bishop, the Dean and the Chapter of the Cathedral. The affinity between the Church and the State, and, perhaps, the magistracy and the almighty, was emphasised the following morning when the Judges attended the Cathedral for divine service. Only after this did they proceed to the main business of the week when, after taking their seats, they supervised the installation of

22. See below, chapter five.

23. D.Hay, "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law," in Hay et al, Albions Fatal Tree, pp 26-31.: B.Cozens-Hardy (ed), The Diary of Syllas Neville, p 174: N.M. Aug 25 1810.

the Grand Jury. Dr Hay has pointed to the close attention the Justices gave to this part of the proceedings. It provided a rare opportunity for a representative of the central government to elaborate on general policy, the state of the law and the duties of the county gentry to whom his speech was ostensibly addressed.[24]

After each member of the Grand Jury had taken the oath, the Judge would invite them to dine with him. This was the first of a long line of occasions for the city and county elite to gather and socialise. There were two assemblies, nightly plays at the theatre, public breakfasts, concerts and, later on in the period, the annual exhibition of the Society of Artists to entertain the cream of society who patronised the assize. As a marriage market the assize was unequalled as an opportunity for the nobility and gentry of Norwich and Norfolk to meet, far from the gaze of the intrusive multitude. In her description of the 1688 assize Martha Chamberlayne gossiped intently on the extraordinary liaisons, the hopes of suitors, and the romantic pressures proffered as explanations for the continued absence of her half brother to whom she wrote.[25]

In portraying the assize as a focus for the city and county elite it is necessary to show some caution. If, at the start of the period, "the company" who flocked to Norwich for the week was exclusive, it is clear that as the period progressed it became less so. Reflecting wider changes in post-Restoration society and

24. Hay, *Op Cit*, p 28. In fact the Judge's speech was for the consumption of the whole people.

25. Cozens-Hardy, *Op Cit*, p 174: N.N.R.O WKC 7/9; letter to William Windham.

the growing impact of Norwich as an urban centre within a primarily agrarian region, the influence of the middling sort on the nature of the assize increased. This was encouraged by the recreational institutions which served the assize in the eighteenth century; all needed the patronage of a relatively broad social set. Assemblies, theatres, and public gardens were all primarily commercial ventures which could not afford the luxury of an overly exclusive audience.[26]

Two of the fullest descriptions of the assize week amusements come from the diaries of persons who were definitely of the middle orders. Joseph Charles, a country vicar, had to hire a post-chaise for the assize week in 1763. He and Mrs Charles attended both the assemblies and saw two plays during the week. He also performed in a concert on the Friday morning. Although Syllas Neville had his roots in the Norfolk squirearchy, his training as a doctor of medicine and his permanently impoverished state, meant that at the time of his visit to the Norwich assize in 1772 he was in very different and reduced circumstances. Nevertheless he had sufficient means to attend an "exceeding brilliant assembly" on the Wednesday night, to breakfast in Moore's *Spring Gardens* along with "all the best company" and to attend a play on the Thursday evening, even if he did have to stand in the pit.[27]

26. Peter Borsay, "The English Urban Renaissance: The development of provincial urban culture.", in Social History no 5, pp 581, 584-7.

27. Cozens-Hardy, *Op Cit*, p 174: Diary of Joseph Charles, Vicar of Wighton 1752-9, August 1st 1763, pp 15-16, (N.N.R.O MS 11927).

During the early nineteenth century the Summer assize would play an important part in the consolidation of middle class values in Norfolk and Norwich. Ironically it would be precisely those values which would lead to the demise of the event in the 1820's and 1830's. To that process we shall return in chapter eight when we explore the changing nature, pace and extent of the opposition to popular rejoicing and public ritual.

Apart from the assize, the quarter sessions were the major events on the judicial calendar of Norwich. Like the assize, although to a much lesser extent, they acted as a focus for the middling and upper sections of Norwich and Norfolk society. In 1810 the Norwich Mercury was able to report that "the sessions were fully attended" and, in particular, that the Ballroom on Wednesday had provided a brilliant display "of the beauty and the fashion of our county." Indeed the mid-week Ball was the highlight of the sessions. In relating how the event was conducted in the early nineteenth century, Charles Hardy indicated the extent of social segregation to which even the most genteel event could be subject. The assembly room was divided into two halves; the county families danced on the dais side of the cord while the citizens of Norwich were relegated to the lower moiety of the hall. It was only later that the cord was taken down and both sections joined up to perform the country dances which continued until the early hours.[28]

28. N.M. Jan 13 1810: Charles Hardy, Memories of Norwich and its inhabitants fifty years ago, (1888), p 37.

One of the most peculiar events on the holiday calendar of Norwich was the water frolic. Annual occasions of this sort began in Norwich during the early eighteenth century. For one day in early July pleasure boats snatched control of the River Yare from the wherries and cargo vessels which normally used it. In the early years the affair remained relatively simple; the society organising it would ornament some barges and sail, perhaps accompanied by a band of music, from Sandling Ferry to Postwick Grove, where they would disembark for a feast or a picnic. By 1781 the event had been appropriated by the Neptune Society, a collection of tradesmen who kept boats for their own pleasure. That year the banks of the river were lined by thousands of people to watch their return to Bun's Pantheon where there was an elegant mechanical representation of their trip. The evening finished with an elaborate display of fireworks.[29]

Even at that stage, however, Syllas Neville could describe the show as "trifling". It was not until the early nineteenth century that the water frolic really took off as a popular event. In 1817 the Norwich Mercury commented on "the rising importance of the water parties in the scale of pleasure." That year the interest in the annual regatta was so great that a programme of events was printed.[30]

It was the introduction of the water frolic at Thorpe in 1821 which really established the event as a

29 N.M. July 7 1781.

30. Cozens Hardy, Op Cit, p 322, entry for July 13 1784: N.M. June 28 1817.

central feature of the popular holiday calendar in Norwich. With the annual regatta declining in both fashion and popularity the decision of John Harvey, a wealthy manufacturer of shawls in Norwich, to organise an alternative event at Thorpe, just a few miles outside the city walls, was warmly welcomed. The Thorpe frolic grew rapidly in content and popularity. Harvey's success in convincing his fellow-manufacturers to allow a general holiday on the appointed day resulted in the patronage of huge crowds. In 1823 10,000 attended the event, while in the following year the number of spectators doubled.

John Harvey's decision in 1822 to open the event to the general public was a product of his Tory paternalism. A former mayor, a sitting magistrate, and the current commanding officer of the East Norfolk Yeomanry, Harvey balanced his authoritarian might with an almost patrician concern for the lot of the industrious poor in Norwich. The high opinion in which he was held by the weavers in the city led them to organise a subscription to give him an inscribed vase as a token of their respect. One aspect of Harvey's paternalism was his friendly attitude towards popular festivity. In the 1820's he led the campaign to revive horse racing at Mousehold Heath, while in 1835 he provided the last recorded defence of the Guild Day celebration. [31]

The Thorpe frolic was highly elaborate. Apart from the general procession of river boats there were sailing matches, rowing contests and a variety of other, more spontaneous, aquatic amusements. On dry land there

31. Trevor Fawcett, "Thorpe Water Frolic", in Norfolk Archaeology Vol XXXVI, part IV, p 395: N.M. June 20 1835.

were two bands, boys climbing greasy poles to win the handkerchiefs on top and, in the evening, a huge show of fireworks. In transforming the annual frolic from a minor and decidedly genteel event into a genuinely popular holiday, Harvey did not lose sight of the need for some social segregation. The upper and middle classes stood on the north bank, safely separated by the Yare, from the plebeian horde on the opposite side. Only the most respectable were invited to the picnic in the afternoon and the Ball in the evening. Even Tory populism had its limits.

The Thorpe Water Frolic continued as a popular component of the holiday calendar in Norwich throughout the 1820's and into the early 1830's. However it came to an abrupt end in 1835 when Harvey, now aged eighty, organised his last event. It seems that with the passage of the Municipal Reform Act in that year the man, the philosophy and the occasion had had their day.[32]

The more spectacular annual water frolic at Great Yarmouth had its historical basis in the tradition of beating the bounds of the riverine jurisdiction. While no ceremony of this kind had ever existed in Norwich, perambulation of a more earthy variety did take place in the city during the eighteenth century. In the fifth week after Easter - "rogation week" as it was traditionally known - the Mayor, the two sheriffs, several aldermen and a large number of citizens travelled the circuit of the city on horseback. Preceded by the city waits, they

32. Fawcett, *Op Cit*, pp 396-7.

began their perambulation at ten in the morning and finished at about two in the afternoon. Afterwards they retired to the New Hall where they participated in a sumptuous feast.[33]

In previous studies of custom, ceremony and community, perambulation has generally been studied as a primarily rural occasion. In that context the use of the annual ceremony of "beating the bounds" to clarify and re-assert territorial rights, particularly those of the community as a whole, has been rightly emphasised. To a great extent perambulation could serve the same purpose in an urban community like Coventry or Colchester which was surrounded by extensive common land. But in most towns and cities matters were somewhat different. In Norwich, for example, the Corporation had no significant land or property and little territory was held in common. Yet the annual ceremony of riding the boundaries of the city was energetically maintained.[34]

To understand why it is necessary to look at another function of perambulation. In beating the bounds a community was literally defining itself for all to see. In Norwich, and other communities with a charter, it was important that the Corporation take the lead in such activity, for it was the city's incorporated status which made it distinct from the communities which surrounded it. The grant of a royal charter provided the city with rights and privileges above and beyond the non-incorporated towns and villages outside its jurisdiction.

33. Mayor's Court Book (N.N.R.O case 16.d) 5 May 1732, 5 May 1733: N.M. June 2 1753, May 30 1772.

34. Robert Malcolmson, *Op Cit*, pp 58-9: Bob Bushaway, *Op Cit*, p 84.

In riding the City bounds the Corporation was reasserting its relative political, social and economic autonomy.

One of the most important benefits granted by the city charter was the right to hold certain fairs. During the eighteenth century Norwich was the venue for two fairs which were of note not merely because of their commercial significance but also because they provided a focus for popular rejoicing and public ritual.[35]

One of these, Trinity fair, soon fell into festive disuse. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century it had been the practice of the Mayor, the sheriffs and the aldermen to form a procession to proclaim the fair. With sword and mace before the Mayor, the aldermen and the sheriffs, dressed in scarlet and violet respectively, provided the event with a ritual legitimisation and in doing so, it was thought, contributed towards upholding the charter rights. Moreover they acted as an extra attraction to encourage trade. In 1732, however, the Corporation had an abrupt change of heart. Announcing that they felt under no obligation to carry out the ceremony and that they considered no benefit resulted from the practice, they instantly abolished an ancient custom.[36]

The reason for their disinclination to continue may have been the declining commercial importance of the fair in the economic life of the city. No such decline

35. List of fairs, 1769 (Coleman and Rye C394.6):
Kemble's list of fairs in Norfolk and Suffolk c 1830. (Coleman and Rye). Interestingly the latter listed twenty eight more fairs in Norfolk than the former. Although this is a tribute to the commercial resilience of fairs, it is also likely to have reflected better research.
36. M.C.B. June 3rd 1710, June 3rd 1732.

affected Tombland fair. Although, like Trinity fair, it had originally been for the sale of horses, sheep and lambs, its real value in the eighteenth century was as an occasion for pleasure. Commencing on Maundy Thursday, and continuing on the following Monday and Tuesday, Tombland fair provided the highlight of the Easter festivities in Norwich. Above all Tombland fair was a time for the children in Norwich. Thousands flocked to the castle meadow to ride on the English swings and the Russian round-a-bouts. Along with the sale of toys, ginger cake and Diss Bread, the fair could boast a variety of attractive amusements; gipsy caravans, theatres and Punch and Judy shows were some of the more conventional fixtures of the event. In the early nineteenth century one of the main attractions of the fair was an arm-less woman who cut out paper shapes with a scissors attached to her toes.[37]

After Tombland the inhabitants of Norwich had to wait until October for St Faith's, the next major fair on the local calendar. Held just a few miles outside of the City walls this event was primarily for the sale of Scottish cattle fattened in Norfolk. But it also had a social significance. Indeed the first day was generally reserved for pleasure. Both country and city folk would flock to what the Mercury called "that annual rendezvous of pleasure and of trade." Syllas Neville's interest was strictly non-commercial; on visiting the first day of the fair in 1783 he delighted in "a mall full of the first

37. Cozens-Hardy, *Op Cit*, p 316; Charles Hardy, *Op Cit*, p 43: N.M. April 21 1810, April 14 1826.

people in the country, among which there were " many very pretty women." [38]

In this chapter it has become clear just how important the context in which it was performed was in determining the nature of popular rejoicing and public ritual at the local level. Norwich and Coventry had some very different and peculiar elements to their respective holiday calendars precisely because they, as cities, were different and peculiar.

One of the major differences between the two cities was their size. At the start of the eighteenth century Norwich was the second largest, richest, and politically most important city in the kingdom. One of the consequences of this position was the exceptional responsibility of the city to display its loyalty to the royal family. In the context of the holiday calendar this could be well done through a particular regard for royal anniversaries.

In addition to the monarch's birthday and accession which were observed throughout England, Norwich took great care to celebrate the birthdays of the Queen and the Prince of Wales, as well as the anniversary of the coronation. In 1733-4 the fifty second birthday of Queen Caroline was greeted by the ringing of bells and marked by the " usual" public rejoicings. That day the Society of True Protestant Britons held their annual feast in her honour. In 1779 there were particularly effervescent celebrations. The morning was ushered in

38. N.M. Oct 4 1734-5, Oct 20 1810: John Beresford, Op Cit, Oct 12 1792: Cozens-Hardy, Op Cit, p 322, Oct 17 1784.

with the ringing of bells and the firing of guns, while, at noon, the western battalion of the Norfolk militia, marched into the market place where they fired three volleys and gave three loud huzzas. After a twelve gun salute from the Castle cannon, the officers of the militia retired to the Guild Hall where they were entertained by the Mayor. In the evening the troops gathered at the Angel Inn where they spent the twelve guineas jointly donated by their officers and the corporation.[39]

The birthday of the Prince of Wales had potentially more ambivalent meaning. Relations between the Hanoverian monarchs and their heirs were generally poor. From 1733 to 1751 Prince Frederick was a constant nuisance to his father as Leicester House, the Prince's home, became the focus for the opposition to the men and measures favoured by the King. In 1788 the tension between George III and his eldest son had reached such a peak that the former tried to throttle the latter. Sometimes it was just not politic for the Corporation to authorise extravagant festivities. In 1783, for example, the magistrates of Norwich stepped in quickly to dampen speculation about an illumination and other extraordinary rejoicings on the Prince of Wales' twenty-first birthday. This may have reflected a desire not to be seen as overly supportive of an heir who was in open dispute with his father over the amount of his annual allowance and the repayment of his already considerable debts.[40]

39. N.M., March 2 1733-4, Jan 23 1779.

40. J.H.Plumb, *Op Cit*, pp 85, 142: N.M Aug 9 1783.

In general, however, the anniversary was marked with some affection. In 1746, the occasion was used to display loyalty at a crucial time for the Hanoverian dynasty. In front of large numbers, the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk reviewed the recently reformed Artillery Company. The evening passed with the drinking of loyal toasts.[41]

The celebration of the coronation held no dangers of inadvertent disloyalty. During the first half of the eighteenth century the rejoicing was particularly exuberant. After the ringing of bells and the firing of guns in the morning, the Corporation proceeded to the Cathedral where they heard divine service. In the afternoon the mayor and the sheriffs entertained their friends, while in the evening the Artillery Company paraded in the market place before retiring to the King's Head to drink toasts to the Church, the King and the Constitution.[42]

41. N.G, Jan 25 1746.

42. N.M, Oct 16 1731, Oct 27 1753.

Chapter Four.

The Institutional Framework; the role of the parish, the trading company, the friendly society and the political club in the festive life of Norwich and Coventry 1660-1835.

The holiday calendar examined in the previous two chapters was communal and inclusive. If only as observers all members of the urban community were actively encouraged to participate in the rejoicing and ritual. In that sense the popular holiday calendar was extra institutional. However there were institutional forces behind the seemingly spontaneous celebrations. Many of the anniversaries on the holiday calendar recalled important points in the development of the church and state and it was the local agencies of these two national institutions, the parish and the corporation, which organised and funded the commemoration of these events. Furthermore their success as manifestations of communal solidarity and loyalty depended on the participation of a number of other local organisations.

This chapter will explore the institutional framework of popular rejoicing and public ritual. Particular attention will be paid to the role of the parish, the trading company, the friendly society and the political club in the festive life of Norwich and Coventry; not only by way of looking at their

contribution to the communal holiday calendar but also by examining the particular occasions for rejoicing which they themselves generated - the perambulation, the annual dinner, the trade feast and the club parade - which differed from communal holiday by being sectional and exclusive. This will necessarily lead to wider reflections on urban culture and the contradictory forces operating upon it during this period.

Although the authority of the established church had been eroded by the Renaissance and the Reformation, the parish continued to play an important role in urban ceremonial. In Norwich and Coventry the most obvious contribution of the parish churches to popular rejoicing was as a base and a sponsor for bell ringing. Practically every event on the national and local holiday calendar, every victory in war or national triumph was greeted with a peal of the bells. In the 1750's William Arderon of Norwich complained about their incessant ringing, "even on the marriage of a common tradesman". He demanded that the practice should be curtailed and confined to the time before divine service or those occasions when the magistrates specifically sanctioned it.[1]

Despite isolated critics like Arderon campanology grew in popularity during the eighteenth century and the bellringers became one of the most

1. Arderon papers (N.N.R.O MS 555 241)

privileged and independent customary groups in the whole community. In the next chapter I will look at their role and their rewards in depth.[2]

Within the parish one of the highlights of ceremonial life was the beating of the bounds. That of the parish of St Michael's at Coventry in 1675 was typical. On the morning of May 24th the Vicar, the churchwardens and some of the parishioners set out from the church gate and proceeded, on foot, to cover "the bounds of the parish that lieth in and adjoining to the city in one entire continent." On the way they marked the boundaries of the parish with an M or, where they coincided with the boundaries of Holy Trinity parish, with an M and a T. They were helped in their task by reference to the parochial and city records and by the presence of "some persons who walked the bounds with us, and were at the walking [of] them the last time." [3]

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries perambulation seems to have been carried out regularly by most parishes in Norwich and Coventry. Traditionally it was done in the fifth week after Easter, a period popularly known as rogation-tide. In 1762, for example the minister, parish officers and the chief inhabitants of St Andrew's in Norwich set off to beat the bounds of their parish "according to the

2. Bob Bushaway, By Rite, pp 49,51.

3. "The bounds of the parish of St Michael's", (C.C.R.O A112)

usual custom, theretofore practiced in the days of rogation." [4]

Perambulation as a festive form was not unique to the parish - we have already discussed beating the city bounds in Norwich and the riding of the Lammas in Coventry - but it did serve particular functions in the parochial context. Firstly it helped to create a mental map of the community in the minds of those who attended and administered the parish church. In 1815 one of the first acts of the new vicar at Holy Trinity in Coventry was to beat the bounds of his new living. In defining the limits of parochial authority it also helped the officers of the parish in their most important social duty, the relief of the poor. The participation of the overseers in walking the bounds of Holy Trinity in August 1725 served more than a ceremonial purpose. Finally regular perambulations of the parish helped to clarify questions of ownership and access. The record kept by the vicar of St Michael's at Coventry in 1690 was used as evidence in a property case at the High Court in the early nineteenth century.[5]

Despite its functional value parochial perambulation declined in the late eighteenth and early

4. W.R.O; Holy Trinity Parish Vestry Order Book (DR581/64 p.163); Holy Trinity Parish Vestry Minute Book (DR581/65), Holy Trinity Churchwardens Accounts 1711 (DR581/46): "The Boundall of the Parish of Holy Trinity, August 1725" (DR 801/74): Accounts of the churchwardens of the parish of St Andrew's, Norwich, 1735-6 (N.N.R.O PD 165/81): Perambulation of the parish of St Andrew's, May 20 1762 (N.N.R.O PD 165/78): Accounts of the churchwardens of the parish of St John Maddermarket, Norwich, 1671-2, 187-8, 1706-7. (N.N.R.O.PD 461/48)
5. Benjamin Poole, Coventry: It's History and Antiquities, p 402: "Boundall of the Parish of Holy Trinity (W.R.O DR801/74: C.C.R.O A.112.

nineteenth century. The ceremony at Holy Trinity in 1815 was rare enough to be included in a list of "noticeable events" in Poole's History of Coventry, while in Norwich the cost of beating the bounds appears in churchwardens' accounts only occasionally after 1750. Two factors account for this decline. Firstly the fragmentation of the urban community militated against such a ceremony. One of the important justifications provided by the Book of Homilies which encouraged and legitimated rogationtide perambulation was that beating the bounds reinforced the unitary and hierarchical nature of the medieval community. With the breakdown of that community much of the justification for the ceremony disappeared.[6] The second reason for the decline of the parochial perambulation was the expense. The eating and drinking which accompanied the marking of the bounds could be costly. In 1707 the churchwarden of St John's Maddermarket in Norwich paid a total of £3.4s.6d for the wine, cakes and bread at the beating of the bounds and a further £1.14s.3d for the meat at the feast which followed it. The two day perambulation of Holy Trinity at Coventry in 1711 cost £13.9s.10d. As overseers of a financial system which often required considerable personal sacrifice on the part of those elected to administer it, few churchwardens could have relished making such payments.[7]

6. Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p 65: Bob Bushaway, By Rite, p 81.

7. Accounts of the churchwardens of the parish of St John the Baptist, (N.N.R.O PD461/48): Churchwardens accounts, Holy Trinity, (W.R.O DR581/46).

Identity with the trade was probably even greater than with the parish. This was duly reflected in the contributions made by different occupational groupings to the festive life of both Norwich and Coventry.

In Coventry each trade was organised into and represented by a company. Although they did not inherit the majesty and authority of the guilds which had preceded them they did have extensive power. Apart from administering the apprenticeship system, regulating the quality of the goods produced by their members and promoting the interests of their respective trade, they were also licenced to grant the freedom and, thus, the franchise of the city. This particular privilege was only taken away in 1722 after an extremely violent and corrupt election.[8]

The companies also performed a social role. In relation to the city as a whole they made a major contribution to popular rejoicing and public ritual, in general, and to civic processions, in particular. It was, for instance, to the companies that the mayors of Coventry turned for help in developing the embryonic Godiva procession in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They also played a part in the more extraordinary festivities of the period. In 1688, for example, the Cordwainers' company spent 18s/6d at the celebrations to proclaim William and Mary, while in 1761

seventeen companies took part in the procession to mark the coronation of George III.[9]

The primary social responsibility of the companies, however, was to their own membership. Their ceremonial calendar provided a unique focus for a disparate fraternity. The highlight of that calendar was the annual dinner at which the officers for the ensuing year were elected. Generally this was held on the feast day of the trade's patron saint and attendance was limited to the Mayor and the members of the company, although wives were sometimes invited as well.[10] Life of each company. Company feasts were one of the most resilient components of the holiday calendar in Coventry. Indeed apart from walking the lands the only evidence of public ritual or commensality in the interregnum diary of Robert Beake relates to his attendance at the feasts of the drapers and the apothecaries on the 1st of January and the 24th of March respectively. In more normal times these fraternal feasts were equally persistent; in the century from the Restoration of Charles II to the accession of George III the annual dinner of the mercers' company, on December 27th, the feast of St John the apostle and evangelist, took place in every year but two, one of the exceptions being due to the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, when the company used all its available funds to make a subscription for the defence of the kingdom.

9. Cordwainers' company account book 1653-1760 (C.C.R.O. A.41): Mercers' company account and minute book (C.C.R.O. Acc 15): Weavers company accounts 1636-1735 (C.C.R.O. Acc 34): John Hewitt, Journal, p 46.

10. J.C.M Nov 18 1776, Dec 2 1776, Nov 22 1779, Jan 3 1780: C.C.R.O. Acc 15.

Apart from the annual feast, the company year also included quarterly dinners. Those of the weavers company were particularly grand, reflecting their status in the local community. In 1716, for example, the bill of fare at the Lady Day feast included thirty pounds of pork, forty six pounds of beef , two legs of mutton, wine, beer and coffee. In addition to the quarterly feasts there were also "nominations" where meat and drink accompanied the appointment of new masters, and feasts for the " young men" which gave recognition to the particular role played by indentured youth in the life of each company.

The wealth of the companies in Coventry often derived from the land which had been left to them by former members. This may explain the entries in some company accounts which refer to perambulations. In 1663, for example, the cordwainers spent £9.13s.8d " at the mayor's walking the land", while in 1676 the mercers company ordained that the annual peas feast should be moved to the beating of the bounds. It is possible that such entries refer to a contribution made by the companies to the Corporation's perambulation of the city bounds although the amounts spent and the coincidence of company feasts suggests otherwise. It is clear, however, that in beating the bounds, whether of their own or the city lands, the companies provided a precedent for the later Whitsuntide perambulations of purse clubs and benefit societies.[11]

In Norwich the companies had far less of an impact. In 1622 the trades were divided into twelve large companies with two aldermen serving as masters of each fraternity. This effectively ensured their political subordination to the authority of the corporation. By the eighteenth century this lack of real power was reflected by a waning social influence.

The social decline of the companies in Norwich led tradesmen to form their own societies. This was even true of the weavers, perhaps the most closely knit of all the occupational groupings in the city. During the seventeenth century the weavers' company was the most powerful economic group in Norwich, having wide powers to stop and search any cloth produced by the masters of the city. Its economic prowess led to relative political vigour; in 1696 Humphrey Prideaux could describe them "as a distinct corporation in themselves." Socially, however, the company made little impact and when, in the early years of the eighteenth century, the company was replaced by a committee of trade, weavers found it easy to switch their allegiance to organisations like the "Loyal society" which was established in 1717. In 1720 a poem entitled "The Weaver" told of how such men would "to jovial clubs repair" where they could meet companions, talk of the state of the trade, and spend their wages. [12]

Of all the trading societies those of the woolcombers, "the aristocracy" of the textile trade,

12. E.M. Thompson (ed), The Letters of Humphrey Prideaux to John Ellis, April 8 1696, p 169; Penelope Corfield, The Social and Economic History of Norwich 1650-1850, pp 242-3.

provided the most spectacular occupational contribution to the festive life of Norwich, in the form of public celebrations for the feast of Bishop Blaise, their patron saint.[13] St Blaise's Day, on February 3rd, had been celebrated in Norwich since the sixteenth century. In 1734 a Norwich paper described the "annual feast" of the jersey or wool combers who paraded the streets with flags inscribed, on the one side "Liberty and Prosperity, and on the other "Prosperity to the woollen manufacture". Two boys headed the procession; the crowns of wool they wore on their heads were decorated with the picture of Alderman Barber who was probably their head master. Four years later the combers were reported to have repeated the celebration "in a very pompous manner." [14]

While Blaise's day was probably celebrated annually by the woolcombers of Norwich public processions to mark the feast became increasingly rare as the eighteenth century progressed. But if they became less frequent they also became more magnificent. The procession of 1752 was a taste of the spectacular things to come. Bishop Blaise, dressed in canonical robes and sitting in an open carriage drawn by four great stallions, led the cavalcade. He was followed by a figure of Jason and the Golden Fleece who was accompanied by

13. Bishop Blaise was the internationally recognised patron saint of the combers; As Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia he was cut to death with iron combs. He was also the patron saint of ploughmen and was believed to have special powers to heal throat infections and to intercede at the moment of death. See Beresford, *Op Cit*, vol 11, p 67n, and Emmanuel Le Roy Laudrie, *Carnival*, pp 99-100.

14. George A. Stephen, "St Blaise's Day in bygone times." Printed in the Eastern Daily Press 2nd-4th February 1933: Newspaper Cuttings (N.N.R.O MC 79/1), Feb 9 1734: N M. Feb 4th 1737-8.

three hundred mounted followers in multi coloured woollen caps and sashes. A total of twelve woolcombers' societies participated in this procession. Each was accompanied by a band of music and boys and girls dressed as shepherds and shepherdesses respectively.[15]

The increasing value of woolcombing to the economy of the eighteenth century city was reflected by the growth of the Blaise procession from a relatively small annual trade feast into a community pageant performed on occasions with importance for the entire city. In 1759, for instance, the procession was the central feature of the celebrations to mark the monarch's coming of age, while in 1783 it was the highlight of the festivities which greeted the Treaty of Paris and the subsequent end of the American war. The change in the function of the event was underlined by the fact that it was no longer necessarily celebrated on February 3rd.[16]

Parson Woodforde and his household attended the procession of March 24th 1783. His account shows what a spectacle the event had become. The cavalcade included Blaise, Jason, forty argonauts, personifications of *Peace* and *Plenty* as well as a banner of *Britannia* and the standard of the city. Thousands of people attended the pageant. The parson noted that the road from Weston to Norwich was "filled with people on horseback and foot, going to see the fine sight" and when he arrived Woodforde announced that

15. Stephen, *Op Cit*: N M. Jan 25 1752.

16. N M. March 29 1783: F.Williams, "February Saints Days", East Anglian Magazine Vol 32 no4, February 1973.

I never saw so great a multitude of people in my life collected together, the market place was as full as it could be, both in the area, at the windows and on the tops of the houses - and every street besides full of people from all parts of the country.[17]

Like many other pageants the Blaise procession was a form of theatre. The spectators provided the audience, the impersonators of Jason, Hercules, Orpheus, Blaise and the other characters the players, the legend the story, and the streets of Norwich the stage. The affinity with the theatre was reinforced in early June when the entire event was reconstructed at the Theatre Royal. This also happened after the procession of 1789.[18]

The processions of 1783 and 1789 were also similar in that they both provided a means of boosting morale within the trade and acted as an expression of optimism in the economic future of woolcoming, in particular, and the city of Norwich, in general. This was a common function of popular rejoicing and ritual; we have already noted the similar role played by the inauguration of the Mayor at Coventry in 1667.

The psychological role of the Blaise procession was even clearer on the last two occasions it was performed. By 1834 the economic circumstances of the trade and the city had changed dramatically; successive foreign wars, competition from the West Riding and the belated introduction of machinery to the Norwich industry had produced depression and unemployment. In an effort to

17. Beresford, *Op Cit*, vol 11 pp 65-8.

18. N M. May 31 1783: Stephen, *Op Cit*.

bring work to the poor of the city the Tory mayor, Samuel Bignold, proposed the formation of a joint stock company for the spinning of yarn. The Norwich Yarn Company opened its first factory in 1834 when, on February 27th, two hundred woolcombers, spinners and sorters participated in a Blaise procession to the proposed site of the factory where Bignold laid the foundation stone.

The company opened its second factory in December 1836 and once again a Blaise procession marked the event. On this occasion Blaise was impersonated by Richard Dickerson, a comber who had also participated in the procession of 1783. One of the big differences between this and the procession of fifty-three years before was the partisan nature of the event. To a certain extent the Tories had now hijacked the procession. The participation of the whifflers and the standard bearers of the old Corporation must have suggested to many the benefits of pre-Reform paternalism powerfully represented by the figure of Bignold who again led the cavalcade. After the ceremony the procession went to St Andrews hall where the directors of the Yarn Company entertained nine hundred of the labouring poor who had participated in the event. The comparison between their generosity and the apparent meanness of the Reformers who had recently abolished the Guild Day feast would not have been lost on the poor of Norwich.[19]

The decline of the textile trade in Norwich coincided with the growth of shoemaking in the city. As a consequence St Crispin began to replace St Blaise in the

19. Stephen, *Op Cit.*

affections of the labouring poor. Although St Crispin never had quite the attraction or the majesty of his predecessor his feast now took on a greater significance in the city's festive repertoire.

St Crispin's Day was on October 25th. In 1810 the journeymen of Smith and Winner were entertained by their employers at the Raven public house in King Street. Afterwards the journeymen published their thanks for "the handsome and becoming manner in which our worthy masters conducted themselves." In fact they wished "that the example which they have so laudably set will be followed by the majority of the brethren in the trade." In this respect the feasts of St Blaise and St Crispin were similar; while the former had been used to project the value of traditional society, the latter was instrumental in reasserting the vertical notion of "the trade" over the horizontal, divisive and novel notion of class. [20]

In 1813 St Crispin's Day was celebrated in a rather more public and extensive manner. On this occasion the journeymen shoemakers, accompanied by a band, paraded through the major streets of the city and dropped in at the various alehouses along the way. Once again some of the masters contributed towards the cost. This was the largest St Crispin's Day procession recorded in the period. The public celebration of St Crispin's day did not become a regular or established feature of the city's holiday calendar. This reflected the failure of shoemaking to provide an adequate substitute, in terms of

20. N.M. Oct 27 1810.

the employment provided, for the manufacture of cloth in Norwich. [21]

The early decline of the trading companies in Norwich was an accelerated version of a wider change which also affected Coventry and other large towns during the eighteenth century. The development of a national market economy and the progressive splintering of the established church into a number of Nonconformist sects led to the breakdown of what Christopher Hill has called "the status community" and its replacement by "the contract community." One of the main results of that development was the destruction of the monopolies of the parish and the trading company and the creation of Dissenting congregations and friendly or benefit societies in which association was entirely optional. [22]

This had important consequences for popular rejoicing and public ritual. One of these was that as the eighteenth century progressed friendly and benefit societies, lodges and clubs took on the festive mantle of the trading companies. It is to their role in the ceremonial life of Norwich and Coventry that I will now turn.

Friendly societies proliferated in both Norwich and Coventry during the eighteenth century. Normally based at an alehouse they met two basic needs which the companies had previously catered for; social insurance and convivial fraternity. In an age of political, economic and demographic uncertainty the desire for the former is

21. Quoted in Wright and Lones (ed), British Calendar Customs, vol 111 pp 102-3.

22. Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism in pre-revolutionary England, pp 483-92

readily understandable in historical terms, the craving for the latter reflected a more universal aspect of human nature.

The early nineteenth century was the heyday of such organisations. The experience of John Bilby of Norwich is indicative of the enthusiasm with which city dwellers became involved in clubs and societies during these years. Formerly secretary of the Sons of Musical Good Humour which was established in September 1824 he was elected to be a member of the Sussex lodge of Odd Fellows in 1833. In the previous year he had taken over his own public house at the Dog Inn on St Paul's Plain. Within three years he was host to a society of weavers which, however, soon declined.[23] Similarly, at Coventry, many artisans were regular contributors to one or more friendly societies. Indeed Monday evening was widely known as "club night" in the city.[24]

As Bilby's autobiography suggests friendly societies were both numerous and varied. Among the organisations which participated in the Godiva Procession at Coventry in 1824 there was the St Michael's lodge of Odd Fellows, the Windmill watchmakers benefit society, an organisation for military veterans, and eleven societies which bore the name of the alehouse at which they were based and were open to all. One of the most unusual friendly societies in the Coventry area was that for women which met at a public house in Kenilworth. As well as providing sisterly company the main purpose of the

23. John Bilby's autobiography (N.N.R.O MC 27/2)

24. J. Prest, The Industrial Revolution at Coventry, p 73.

club was to give financial assistance during and just after pregnancy.[25]

In Norwich there was an even greater range of clubs and societies. Writing of the 1830's Charles Hardy noted that " Norwich had begun to be noted for its clubs, a very old one being called the Gregorians of which my maternal grandfather was a member." Another old organisation was the Scots Society which provided mutual assistance to the many immigrants and itinerants from north of the border.[26]

Among the other organisations which existed in Norwich during the early nineteenth century there was a society of watermen, a society of ancient britons, a friendly society of all trades and a young society of St George. A major concern of these societies was the moral respectability of their members. This was reflected in their rule books. That of the Young Society of St George was typical of many, disowning drunks and refusing to pay out money for injuries resulting from fighting or sickness because of venereal disease.[27]

The rule book also determined ceremonial behaviour. The highlight of the societies' year was the annual dinner. Easter and Whit Monday were the two most popular dates for this event, although there were

25. Surviving programme of the procession, 1824; see appendix: J.C.M June 24 1799.

26. Charles Hardy, Memories of Norwich and its inhabitants fifty years ago, p 41. The city's links with Scotland were traditionally strong, one of the most important was the transportation of black Scottish cattle to Norfolk where they were fattened for St Faith's fair in October. Many of the drovers, pedlars and hawkers who travelled in their wake look to the Scots Society for temporary relief.

27. Rules of Friendly Societies (N.N.R.O case 21, shelf e, box 6).

societies who imitated the companies in celebrating the feast day of a relevant saint. The Scots Society, for example, held their annual dinner on St Andrew's Day (November 30th). It was the usual custom to elect the officers for the forthcoming year before the feast and to use the occasion for the payment of arrears. Great care was taken over the preparation of the dinner. The clerk and the supervisor of the Young Society of St George were obliged to meet at 7.a.m on the Saturday preceeding the feast to procure the best provisions from the market, while the Society of watermen checked the beer before the meal. The hours of the feast were often stated in the rule book. St George's Society agreed that the dinner should begin at 8.p.m and that all drinking was to finish by ten.[28]

The annual dinner was more than a convivial conclusion to the election of the club's officers. It provided the most important occasion for the members of the society to express their solidarity. In 1794, for example, the members of the George In The Tree benefit society at Berkswell, just outside the city of Coventry, proceeded from the alehouse to the parish church " where they heard a most excellent sermon, very applicable to the occasion". Dressed in blue staves and ribbons they returned to the inn to have their feast, after which they drank the loyal and constitutional toasts habitual on such occasions.[29]

Up until now I have looked at the friendly societies in terms of the fragmentation of urban culture

28. Ibid.

29. J.C.M. June 30 1794.

in the three centuries which followed the Reformation. But the practices of the friendly societies also reflected and consolidated the unitary aspects of urban culture; customs in common which provided the inhabitants of towns and cities with a shared identity. The trade, the corporation and the parish provided the institutional framework of a traditional civic culture from which the friendly societies and clubs inherited many of their festive forms. The annual dinner, public processions and perambulations were only the most obvious of the practices which those associations had adopted from their institutional antecedents.[30]

Freemasonry provided one of the most explicit links between traditional civic culture and the ceremonial practices of the voluntary clubs and societies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Many of their rituals and symbols were adopted from the practices of the stonemasons. Indeed the origins of freemasonry can be traced back to the admission of honorary members to the "Acception" set up by the London Masons' Company in 1619. Many of the symbols which continue to characterise the initiation ceremony reflect the occupational origins of the movement. On joining the new mason is presented with an apron which identifies him as an "entered apprentice" within the lodge. The "working tools" of the first degree are then presented to the initiate, although in the context of speculative masonry they take on additional meaning. The twenty four-inch gauge represents the twenty-four hours of the day which every mason is

30. Barry Reay (ed), Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England, p 73.

supposed to divide up into parts for prayer, labour, rest and the assistance of other masons while the gavel represents the force of conscience and the chisel, the advantages of education.[31]

From the 1720's masonic lodges were established in many of the larger English provincial towns. In Norwich the first lodge met at the Maid's Head in 1724, while at Coventry the warrant for the first lodge was granted in 1755. Although in London the development of masonry was stemmed by the conservative reaction which followed the Gordon riots, the growth of the movement, particularly in the provinces, resumed after the 1780's. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries many members of the social, political and economic elite of Norwich and Coventry were masons.[32]

John Money has characterised freemasonry as an attempt to sacramentalize the ideals of the age of reason. Much of the ceremony involved in that process was private and deliberately mystical. There was, however, a public profile to the affairs of the masons. It was the custom of the masons in London, for example, to parade the streets in their aprons. One of the reasons for doing so was to counter the natural suspicions of those outside the movement that masonry was anything other than loyal and respectable. The need to project an open and a consitutional image grew in the years which followed the

31. Norman Mackenzie (ed), Secret Societies, p 155.

32. John Money, Experience and identity; Birmingham and the West Midlands 1760-1800, p 137: W.H.Jones, The Maid's Head: its history and associations 1287-1947:

R.C.Russell, Freemasonry in Warwickshire, pp 32-3:

F.Forster (ed), History of the Trinity lodge of Freemasonry: Trinity lodge membership list 1787-1807 (C.C.R.O Acc 997): N.M. August 28 1819.

French Revolution. This explains their increasing willingness in both Norwich and Coventry to participate in public ceremonies. The masons of Coventry took part in a wide range of events in the early nineteenth century including parades to open new churches, the funerals of deceased brethren and the procession to mark the coronation of George IV in 1821.

Their attempt to cultivate a loyalist image was helped by the strong links which the movement developed with the later Hanoverians. In 1813 the Duke of Sussex was elected Grand Master of the Ancient Lodge after the voluntary retirement of his brother George who had just been appointed Regent. At the time of his election another brother, the Duke of Kent, was Grand Master of the rival Union lodge. [33]

In fact it was his link with the Masons which brought the Duke of Sussex to Norwich in 1819. The inauguration of Thomas Coke, Member of Parliament for Norfolk as Grand Master provided the reason for the first ever visit by one of George III's sons to the city. It is worth looking at the visit in some detail because of the light it sheds on the uses of urban ceremonial and the common nature of the cultural practices involved.

The Duke arrived on the eve of the inauguration and was taken through the crowd filled streets to a house in Queen Street where he was to stay during his visit. The following morning at about half past ten the royal visitor set out for the assembly rooms

33. In 1813 Sussex and Kent negotiated the agreement which reunited the two lodges after nearly sixty years. Money, *Op Cit*, p 141; Mackenzie, *Op Cit*, pp 163-4; Foster, *Op Cit*, pp 13, 36, 38, 39, 41, 43.

where the inauguration was to take place. Despite the intense heat the streets were " thronged with thousands and tens of thousands" and the market place was " a moving mass of spectators", the windows surrounding it being packed with women and children.

In reporting the event the Norwich Mercury took care to reinforce the loyalist pretensions of the masons, stating that " whatever is understood generally of the craft of masons assists in proving that its principles are those of social order and benevolence, built upon that grand and solid foundation the commandments of religion." The affinity with the church was emphasised by the procession of the assembled masons to the Cathedral where they heard an appropriate sermon delivered by the chaplain to the city's lodge. The cavalcade was spectacular. The brethren of the city headed the procession in their black robes, aprons, and emblems of office. Behind them there were trumpeters, bands of music, representatives of the various Norfolk lodges, the Grand Sword Bearer, the stewards, the tyler and, of course, His Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex. The day finished with a masonic feast at St Andrew's hall. At this stage the masculine monopoly of the proceeding was temporarily and partly broken by the presence of ladies, although they were only allowed to enjoy the dinner as spectators.[34]

34. After a night's rest the brother of the Regent concluded his visit by accepting the freedom of the city, attending the exhibition of the Society of Artists, and by agreeing to become the godfather of the Mayor's new born son. The Mayor proudly announced that he would henceforth consider August 23rd as " one of the brightest red letter days in his calendar." N.M. August 28 1819.

There were clear echoes of the practices of the Norwich magistracy in this inaugural ritual of the Norfolk masons. For as we shall see in chapter nine the enclosed installation, the subsequent procession to the cathedral for divine legitimation and the public feast at St Andrew's hall were all features of mayor-making in Norwich.

It was in the activities of political clubs, however, that the adoption of civic style was most apparent. The development of a neo-magisterial manner by the True Blues had more than a symbolic significance. In a city run by a closed Whig corporation the public rituals of this Tory/Independent group must have seemed competitive, challenging and possibly subversive. Like the friendly societies the highlight of their year was the annual dinner. However they also initiated other, more obviously political festivities, particularly in the first half of the 1780's when the balance of political power in the city was beginning to shift in the Tories' favour. In 1780, for example, they celebrated the anniversary of the Restoration. By doing so they drew attention to an event which been ignored by the Corporation for many years because of its distinctly Tory associations. In the following year the True Blues introduced an entirely new and highly politicised addition to the local festive repertoire. On November 29th they celebrated their victory in the "Battle of the Bludgeons", the high point in the orgy of violence which

had taken place in the parliamentary by-election of 1780.
[35]

In Norwich the Bell and Castle Corporation showed the same ability to adapt civic forms. In 1764 a group of tradesmen who met at the Bell Inn formed their own "corporation" and elected William Alderson as their first "mayor". By 1768 the society had drawn up a set of rules for the incoming officers; the new mayor had to contribute 10s/6d and five pints of beer towards the election supper, the "Recorder", "Steward" and the "Speaker of the Commons" were likewise obliged to give a five pint bottle of liquor, while the "Sheriff" and the "Common Council" were called upon to provide one bottle and a quarter of a guinea towards the cost of the annual dinner which was to take place at Thorpe during the summer season and be entitled the "Sheriffs feast". [36]

The festivities of this "corporation" had much in common with the mock mayor making ceremonies which existed in many parts of the country, including Norfolk. The decision in 1766 to allow only those who "have had the honour to be insolvent" to stand for office is similar, in its deliberate foolishness, to the qualification for the franchise in the mock election at Garrat which was based not on wealth and privilege but on

35. J.C.M. Jan 11 1779, June 5 1780, November 26 1781, August 29 1791.

36. Jewsons' notes on Norwich clubs and societies (N.N.R.O MC 64/5): Part of the reason that William Alderson was elected as the first "mayor" was that he shared the same initials as first mayor of the city.

" having had a woman in the open air within that district." [37]

This sort of calculated levity was part of a wider carnivalesque culture. As with the " woman on top" mock ceremonies were forms of " the world turned upside down" which was a central aspect of festivity and play in early modern England. Like the " woman on top" mock politics could have several layers of meaning. At one and the same time it could be humorous and cutting, sardonic and subversive and, of course, its meaning could change over time. The history of the Bell and Castle Corporation is a case in point.

The corporation seems to have been established for purely social reasons. There is no evidence that its founders had a political axe to grind. In this respect it differed from the mock mayor making at Garrat which commemorated a legal victory in an election year which re-established common access to some local land. Like the Garrat election, however, it developed a political dynamic of its own, although it did so in the context of the French Revolution rather than the campaign of John Wilkes.

As we have seen the divisions caused by the French Revolution in Norwich were particularly deep. [38] The city's council was temporarily split over the issues

37. John Brewer, " Theatre and counter theatre in Georgian politics; The mock election at Garrat", in Radical History Review, no 22 Winter 1979-80 p 8: There were a number of mock mayor making ceremonies in and near Norwich. The most famous was the Costessy Guild on Whit Monday which was a mockery of the Norwich Guild Day. On the Guild Day itself there were mock ceremonies on the day waterfront and at Pockthorpe, a weaving village near the city. See chapter nine.

38. See chapter one.

raised by the event; the effect on the fraternity at the Bell Inn was far more fundamental. In 1793 the club divided over their attitude to the democratic principles being espoused by the Gallic revolutionaries. Those who were broadly in agreement with them stayed at the Bell and became known as the " Rump Parliament", while those against left to form the " Castle Corporation".

The " Rump" soon disappeared. The conservative reaction which set in after the start of the war against France, and resulted in the arrest of Isaac Saint, left them isolated and unpopular. By contrast the " Castle Corporation" flourished, surviving both the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars which followed. Each year they held their anniversary feast where they elected the officers for the forthcoming year. Significantly they had their annual dinner on William Pitt's birthday. They became closely identified with the Tories in Norwich and remained aware of the political nature of the arguments which had led to the split of the original club. As late as 1819 the "Steward" recalled that event in his speech to the newly elected officers of the corporation.[39]

This examination of the institutional context of rejoicing and ritual in Norwich and Coventry has shed light on the diversity of the groups which supported and generated urban ceremonial. Popular festivity was not the monopoly of the magistracy and the clergy, nor was it confined to the structure of the communal holiday

39. N.N.R.O MC 64/5: N.M. Jan 30 1819.

calendar. By participating in communal rejoicing and by generating their own ceremonial the parishes, the trading companies, the friendly societies and the political clubs all helped to sustain and nurture festive life in these two cities.

The continuing involvement of these organisations in communal rejoicing was a tribute to the vitality of urban culture in the years from the Restoration to Municipal Reform. Furthermore the similarity of the forms they chose to express their solidarity was a reflection of the unitary nature of that culture; deprived of rural traditions the people of Norwich and Coventry looked to the parish, the trading companies and the corporation for their models of festive behaviour. The rituals of the voluntary clubs and societies which developed in the eighteenth century were part of that cultural inheritance.

There is a danger of exaggerating the apparent unity and vitality of urban culture in these years. There were also strong centrifugal forces at work. The growth of friendly societies and political clubs and the decline of the parish and the trading companies was a reflection of the fragmentation of the urban community. That fragmentation was the result of social and economic developments which began a long time before the beginning of the period with which I am concerned. Nevertheless it would reach a peak in the early nineteenth century and lead to a divergence of polite and plebeian cultures. The effect of that divergence on rejoicing and ritual in Norwich and Coventry will be discussed in chapter eight.

However in the short term this fragmentation led to a revitalisation of festive life. During the early eighteenth century, for example, the growth of political conflict led to the use of popular rejoicing and public ritual for sectarian ends. As a consequence the celebration of those royal anniversaries at the heart of the urban holiday calendar was given a fresh and powerful impetus. The form and results of that development will be examined in chapters six and seven. In the next chapter I want to look at the commercialisation of rejoicing and ritual. Although this was primarily a result of economic and intellectual developments in the eighteenth century, it too had its roots in the historically extended fragmentation of the unitary medieval urban community.

Chapter Five.

The Commercialisation of Popular Rejoicing and Public Ritual.

The commercial exploitation of popular rejoicing and public ritual rose to new levels in the eighteenth century. While there had always been gains to made from the preparations for and the conduct of popular holiday the scale and the consciousness of those benefits changed dramatically. That change was part of what Professor Plumb has called " the commercialisation of leisure." [1]

This chapter will look at the nature and the consequences of the commercialisation of popular rejoicing and public ritual in Norwich and Coventry. Beginning with an examination of the economic and financial changes which brought about and consolidated that commercialisation it will proceed to look at those groups which gained from the preparations for and the conduct of public festivity. It will conclude by looking at some events which had the most obvious economic value both for these groups and for the community as a whole. Although the main concern of this chapter will be to indicate the commercial potential of rejoicing and ritual it will also look at some of the factors which inhibited the full exploitation of that potential.

1. McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, The Birth of a Consumer Society, pp 265-85.

The commercialisation of leisure was one consequence of the consumer boom which took place in the years after 1750. This boom resulted from a coincidence of social, economic and intellectual forces. The agriculturally induced expansion of the economy in the first half of the eighteenth century combined with a growth in the numbers and wealth of the middling orders, the increasing concentration of the population into easily accessible urban markets, and more progressive attitudes towards the economic value of expenditure to provide an unprecedented stimulus to demand. Much of that novel demand was focussed on the purchase of luxury goods and the extension of leisure.[2]

The middling sort, whose increased surplus wealth largely fuelled the consumer boom of the later eighteenth century, were concentrated in the towns and cities. As a consequence urban society was first to benefit from commercialisation. Indeed the "urban renaissance" identified by Peter Borsay was largely a product of that process. The greater attention to the quality and regularity of urban architecture, the expansion in the range and prosperity of luxury craftsmen and the development of new leisure facilities could not have taken place if the disposable income of the town based middling sort had not increased.[3]

One of the most important consequences of the rising demand for leisure and luxury was a change in the method of funding and organising public entertainment.

2. Ibid, pp 13-33

3. Peter Borsay, "The English urban renaissance: the development of provincial urban culture c1680-1760," in Social History no 5, May 1977.

Since the Renaissance in the fifteenth century the major stimulus to cultural production had been provided by the patronage of royalty and nobility. Such a system worked well in a society where demand was strictly limited to those who could afford individual gratification. The problem in the eighteenth century was that while demand was increasing, those making the new demands, the middling sort, did not have the personal wealth to sustain the system of patronage. Individually they could not afford to hire an orchestra, to commission a play or to maintain a string of racehorses.[4]

An alternative system of funding had to be developed, one which could allow the cost of collective entertainment to be shared while ensuring that the amusements so provided remained socially exclusive. Only the subscription method could meet both conditions. As the eighteenth century progressed a wide variety of urban leisure was funded in this way. In Coventry, for example, concerts, bowling and horseracing were financed by subscription. Indeed this system of financing proved so convenient that it caught on in other areas of urban life. In 1777 the gentlemen of Coventry met to organise a subscription to help the conduct of the American war, while in 1793 a subscription was raised in Norwich for the relief of the poor.[5]

The subscription system had its limitations. Although it facilitated the transition between semi-

4. McKendrick et al, *Op Cit*, p 280; Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance; Landscape and Leisure in the Provincial Town c 1660-1770* (Ph.D), p 417.

5. J.C.M. Sept 1 1767, June 10 1759, Sept 23 1760, May 12 1777, Jan 12 1777: N.M. Jan 5 1793.

private and fully public entertainment, it could only ever provide a half way house on the road to full blooded commercialisation. However by the eighteenth century many aspects of urban leisure, in general, and popular rejoicing, in particular, were run on completely commercial lines. Exhibitions at alehouses, plays at the theatre and many assemblies, for example, were open to all who were prepared and able to pay for admission.

Those running such facilities took risks. If they failed to attract an audience they went out of business. There was no patron to fall back on and no subscription to tap. They were entrepreneurs in the real sense of the word. Perhaps one of the best examples of this new breed was Philip Astley the proprietor of the first major equestrian circus. Travelling from town to town he provided a focus for the previously disparate performers who wandered around London and the provinces in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Although a brilliant showman and trainer in his own right, his greatest genius was as a businessman. His marketing innovations were legendary. On entering a new town he would assemble a circus parade to pass through the main streets, thus ensuring instant and free publicity. Moreover the differential pricing structure he adopted helped to maximise his audience. On visiting Coventry in December 1776 he offered admission to the "working people" of the city at half the price of that paid by "ladies and gentlemen." [6]

6. McKendrick et al, *Op Cit*, p 276: J.C.M Dec 17 1776.

It is likely that Astley remained in Coventry for the Christmas period. This and other holiday events provided great opportunities for the new entrepreneurs of luxury and leisure. Matthew Boulton "eagerly anticipated royal birthdays" in the hope of using such occasions to launch a new range of topical buttons. Josiah Wedgewood exploited popular rejoicings of a more extraordinary kind. The death of Chatham, the acquittal of Admiral Keppel and the peace with France were all objects of ceramic glorification.[7]

Astley, Boulton and Wedgewood were among the national grandees of the leisure industry. There were, however, a host of lesser beneficiaries of leisure, in general, and the holiday calendar, in particular. Among those who made commercial gains from the preparations for and the conduct of public rejoicing there were performers to entertain the crowds, tradesmen to service the temporary excess and craftsmen to erect the festive stage. It is to their fortunes that we shall now turn.

Most performers and exhibitionists in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were itinerant. Like most purposeful travellers, whether circuit judge, preacher or pedlar, their route was carefully worked out in advance. Dependent on the contributions of the general public, they timed their visits to coincide with periods of maximum festive indulgence. Accordingly, among the great national feasts, the Christmas season was the most popular occasion for exhibitions and shows in Norwich and Coventry.[8]

7. McKendrick et al, *Op Cit*, pp 72, 122.

8. M.C.B: J.C.M: N.M.

However these showmen were also attracted by holidays of a very local nature. Their visits to towns often coincided with the time of a large fair. At Coventry a wide range of performers arrived during the time of the Great Show Fair; tight rope walkers, equestrians, animal shows and numerous waxworks took advantage of the annual festive hurry. The opportunities arising from other large public gatherings were also exploited to the full. At Norwich the Guild week and the period of the assize were always well patronised by the wandering entertainers.[9]

Some travellers regularly returned to Norwich and Coventry. The Puppeteer Ewan Jones, for example, made repeated visits to Norwich during the 1690's. Such an arrangement had advantages for both the entertainers and the authorities. The former could build up a reputation and a clientele, while the latter could have some assurance of order. The licences provided by the Norwich Corporation in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were only given on the condition that the performers behaved themselves well.[10]

The licencing system in Norwich was developed to give the Corporation some control over the numerous puppet shows and other diversions which visited the city in the late seventeenth century. Norwich was second only to London in the number and variety of entertainments it attracted and the complaint to the King in 1663 which led to the introduction of the licencing system specified the distraction such shows caused to the working people of

9. J.C.M June 7 1762, June 22 1767, June 12 1831.

10. M.C.B 4 May, 15 May, 15 June, 28 Oct, 4 Dec, 1700.

the city. There was, in fact, a great deal of hostility to performers of all kinds, not just because they undermined labour discipline but also because of the public disorder and immorality which they encouraged.[11]

Theatre companies were particular objects of concern. Although most seventeenth century troupes were based in London they travelled widely and visited Norwich with great regularity. In the eighteenth century there was a growing tendency for such companies to move out of London and set up a base in a large provincial centre. As the largest provincial centre of all Norwich was at the forefront of this development. The three provincial companies which existed in the 1720's had all attempted to settle in Norwich but those who eventually took up residence in York and Bath were forced to migrate because of the intense competition.[12]

The great advantage offered by Norwich was a large, concentrated and relatively wealthy population. However even such a salubrious market had its limits. In order to supplement their income, the "company of comedians" as the surviving Norwich troupe was known, continued to play throughout East Anglia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, taking advantage, as they did so of the constantly shifting holiday momentum. Beginning on Plough Monday they remained in Norwich from January to May (the so called "winter season") and returned for three weeks in July and August for the assize. In the intervening period they

11. S. Rosenfield, Strolling Players and Drama, 1660-1765, p 35.

12. P. Borsay, Thesis, p 257.

played at Dereham and Ipswich, and followed their return visit to Norwich with a short sojourn in Beccles. In late September they went to Bury for the fair staying until early October when they departed for Colchester where they spent the last three months of the year. They returned to Norwich via Yarmouth where they played for the Christmas period.[13]

The development of the theatre in Norwich preceeded the national growth of provincial drama in the eighteenth century. The growing urban market, the defeat of Puritanism and the increased willingness of the companies to seek their fortunes away from London produced a recovery in provincial drama after over a century of depression.

Even in Coventry, one of the cities where the medieval pageants and plays had been most severely repressed, the fortunes of the theatre improved dramatically in the late eighteenth century. In 1759 the local thespians were still performing at the riding school. By 1786, however, the players were basking in the civic glory of St Mary's hall; a move which reflected their increased status in the city. Certainly the arrival of two theatre companies in July 1773 was widely welcomed, the Coventry Mercury suggesting that "the opposition...[will] breed emulation, in both parties, and prompt each to use every endeavour to merit the countenance of the public".[14]

13. N.M: Rosenfield, Op Cit, pp 62, 78: McKendrick et al, Op Cit, p 277.

14. J.C.M Feb 12 1759, April 10 1786, July 12 1773.

It is clear, however, that the thespians did not get a universal welcome from the citizens of Coventry. In July 1778 the Mayor arrested the Master of the comedians when he refused to leave the city. As with many recreations associated with the holiday calendar - the comedians were attracted by the Show Fair - attitudes towards the theatre often reflected political preferences. The Tory Mercury believed that the Mayor's hostility had arisen from "party prejudices", although such an explanation was stoutly rebutted by the politically sympathetic Gazette which went out of its way to defend the actions of the Whig Mayor. The presence of the players continued to be a source of controversy in the city. In 1785 when the players performed on behalf of "the distressed weavers" the Mercury challenged "the enemies of the comedians" to "go...and do the same".[15]

In the long run such antagonism neither helped nor hindered the development of provincial theatre. In contrast its progress was affected quite considerably by the erection of purpose built playhouses in many of the larger cities during the mid eighteenth century; perhaps the most obvious manifestation of the "urban renaissance" identified by Peter Borsay. Norwich was one beneficiary of this development when, in 1758, the Theatre Royal was opened. Built on the model of Drury Lane it could accomodate an audience of over seven hundred. Large audiences were needed to ensure a profit

15. J.C.M July 6 1778: Piercy's Coventry Gazette July 10 1778: J.C.M Feb 13 1785.

which remained the only guarantee of the company's survival.[16]

That survival was further ensured by hard headed, imaginative and self-interested commercial management. The considerable personal fortunes which managers like Thomas Dogget accumulated were built upon an entrepreneurial foundation. In January 1700, for example, Dogget promoted the performance of the Opera Dioclesian in Norwich, the very first outside of London. The same entrepreneurial zeal characterised the management of the company throughout the eighteenth century, a zeal which overcame any notions of loyalty or sentiment. In 1826, for example, the company delayed their trip to the Norwich assize - one of the original foundations of their success - in favour of the more popular Ipswich races.[17]

Many aspects of the way provincial theatres were run in the eighteenth century remained distinctly uncommercial. The sharing system, the benefit performances and the adoption of noble patrons were all residues of a more private age. It is clear, however, that the theatre in Norwich, Coventry and elsewhere in this period was increasingly run along commercial lines, and, moreover, that the exploitation of the opportunities provided by the national and the local holiday calendar played an important part in that process.

16. R. Beatniffe, Norfolk Tour, p 17.

17. Borsay, Thesis, pp 321-2; Rosenfield, Op Cit, p 44: N.M July 22 1826.

There were other groups of performers who had an interest in the preservation and proliferation of popular rejoicing and public ritual. Of these the most prominent were the waits and the bellringers.

The waits of Coventry had been discharged by the Puritans. In 1674, however, they were revived as part of a more general reconstitution of the city's festive life. In addition to playing on occasions of rejoicing and ritual they were also charged with more pedestrian functions. The council order which led to their restoration instructed them to play their instruments through the streets of the city from two o'clock of every week day morning to the break of day throughout the Winter. Apart from the duties laid down by the Corporation the waits also performed for the various companies at their annual feasts.

Despite the occasional profits from such performances the waits were almost totally reliant on the patronage of the Council. It is not surprising, therefore, that the musicians were seriously affected by the recurrent financial crises which shook the city government. When, for example, the Corporation appointed a committee in 1704 to review the city's finances the payment to the waits was the first to be discontinued. In 1710 they were subjected to much greater indignity when the Corporation sold their badges and silver chains to help pay off the increasing debt.

However the loss of their festive regalia did not signal the end of the waits in Coventry. At several points in the eighteenth century the Council agreed to

purchase new cloaks for the waits and they continued to ride in the Godiva Procession. Their contribution to the festive life of the city did decline, however. By 1870 their playing was confined to the week before Christmas.[18]

In Norwich the waits had a rather better time. Not only did they survive the Puritan onslaught but they also served a corporation which enjoyed relative financial stability. In order to take full advantage of the opportunities that existed the musicians formed themselves into a regular company. Appropriately they had their annual feast on St Cecilia's Day when they elected their Headman and wardens.[19]

They were similar to trading companies in other ways too. Like their more conventional counterparts they sought a monopoly over their trade. In November 1733 the Mayor's Court confirmed that monopoly when it ordered that in future "no person or persons be permitted or do play in the streets upon any musical instrument to any person or persons within this city or county unless it be the company of musicians belonging to this city." [20] The high regard with which the waits were treated in Norwich resulted in part from the discipline the company exercised over the players. Members could be fined for absenteeism, insobriety and sloppy dress. In return for

18. Benjamin Poole, Coventry: It's History and Antiquities, pp 56-7: Council Minutes (C.C.R.O A.14(g))

19. Memorandum book of the Norwich company of musicians or waits of the city of Norwich 1714-1791 (N.N.R.O MF 11)

20. M.C.B. Nov 28 1733.

obeying these rules the waits were guaranteed work and provided with a degree of social insurance. [21]

The wages the company received from the Corporation for performing at the Guild and other ceremonies were supplemented by their earnings from playing at weddings and occasions when "persons of quality" entered the city. Nevertheless the decision of the Corporation to dispense with their services in 1791 was a mortal blow. Despite a brave attempt at reform the Company of Musicians disappeared from the festive life of the city. [22]

Like the waits the bellringers were one of the most widely esteemed of customary groups within the community. Both sought to defend their monopoly and preserve their skills as keenly as any craft or trade in the eighteenth century. The ringers were helped in that task by the growing popularity of campanology after the Restoration and the subsequent local enthusiasm which greeted their achievements. The report of the Coventry Mercury in 1772 which highlighted the success of the Society of Coventry Youths in ringing an extensive peal of Bob Majors ended with the challenge "to Birmingham, Stourbridge and Leicester alliance, [that] the youths of fair Coventry now bid defiance." In 1775 a successful round of grandfire cinques at St Peter Mancroft, Norwich was greeted with equal pride as the Norwich Mercury noted that the present ringers "maintain the character which

21. In 1721, for example, it was agreed that musicians entering the fraternity because of the death of a member should pay twenty shillings to the widow and the orphans of the deceased.

22. Memorandum Book, Dec 27 1721, Oct 6 1755, Nov 22 1771, Jan 14 and Dec 27 1791.

St Peter's has long supported of being equal if not superior to any in the country." [23]

The ringers were paid by the parish. In 1701, for instance, the churchwarden of Holy Trinity, Coventry paid out a total of eighteen shillings for ringing on Holy Thursday, the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution, Guy Fawkes day, the birthday of Queen Elizabeth and the proclamation of Queen Anne. In 1717, when additional payments were made on Queen Anne's birthday, the anniversary of the Restoration, King George I's coronation day and the Prince of Wales' birthday, the total had risen to £2.7s. [24]

In Norwich the ringers made similar profits from popular rejoicing. In 1706-7, for example, the ringers of St John the Baptist were paid £ 3.4s for performing on nine different occasions, four of which were in thanksgiving for victory against Spain. The variations in the amounts paid to the ringers of each parish reflected either the number retained or the wealth of the particular congregation. The company of ringers at St Andrew's was one of the more highly paid groups. For performing on seven occasions in 1712-13 they received nearly double the amount given to the ringers of St John just six years previously. Despite the variations and whatever the total sum it is clear that the payments made to the ringers were a valuable and valued contribution to their personal income. [25]

23. Bob Bushaway, By Rite, p 51: J.C.M Nov 16 1772: N.M Nov 25 1775.

24. Churchwardens' Account Book (W.R.O DR 581/46).

25. Churchwardens' Account Books (N.N.R.O PD 461/48, PD 165/81).

In Norwich the thirty four parishes had sole responsibility for paying the ringers. However in Coventry, where there were only two parishes in the late seventeenth century, the Corporation supplemented their income. In 1704 the amount originally put by for this purpose was eight pounds. This probably explains the relatively low pay that the Coventry ringers received from their parishes at the time. However by the late seventeenth century the Corporation was increasingly unwilling to provide this subsidy. In September 1699 the council agreed that

upon days of ringing extraordinary [such] as the fifth of November, Queen Elizabeth's coronation or upon any occasion respecting his present majesty and government the ringers of the three churches shall have ten shillings a day allowed them...that is to say five shillings to St Michael's, three shillings to Trinity and three shillings to Bablake to be paid also by the city wardens. And it is agreed that the like Bailiffs shall pay no more money.

In this order there is more than a hint of irritation at the constant demands of the ringers. The same irritation is apparent in a similar directive two years later when the Council officers were instructed not to pay any money to the ringers of St Michael's "without the express and particular orders of this house." [26] In 1704 the payment to the ringers was discontinued. Despite this loss of an important sponsor the ringers in Coventry, as in Norwich, continued to play a vital and rewarding part

26. It would not be surprising if the members of the Council House in Coventry were at loggerheads with the city's ringers; Bob Bushaway has portrayed bellringers, in general, as an assertive and arrogant group. Bushaway, *Op Cit*, pp 48-57.

in popular rejoicing and public ritual.[27] In this respect they showed themselves to be a good deal more independent and resilient than the waits.

Both the bellringers and the waits were official and relatively passive beneficiaries of popular festivity. Among the more active - the entrepreneurs of urban leisure - perhaps the most important was the innkeeper. His establishment was the "foundation of the leisure industry". Before the erection of purpose built facilities the public house accommodated theatre, assemblies, shows and exhibitions. Of course many of these took place in the context of the holiday calendar. Furthermore the public house acted as a "watering hole" where the participants in popular rejoicing could whet their festive appetites. The role of the inn or alehouse in this regard is, therefore, important to this study.

[28]

Inns and alehouses formed a prominent part of the urban landscape in the eighteenth century. In the 1750's William Arderon compiled a list of 178 different alehouse signs in Norwich. For the same decade John Hewitt noted the names of over one hundred public houses in Coventry. In both cities they served many purposes. At Coventry in 1766 a bowling green opened at the Bull and a card-assembly took place at the Half Moon tavern. In 1767 there was an exhibition of lions and tigers at the Dolphin during the time of the Show Fair, while five

27. Coventry council minute book (C.C.R.O A.149(c)) pp 54, 123, 153.

28. Borsay, Thesis, p 322.

years later the Mermaid provided the stage for a zebra during the time of the May fair.[29]

At Norwich the amusements offered by the inns and alehouses were just as varied and enticing. During the Christmas holidays of 1730-1, for example, a magician was performing at the Angel in the market place, while at the nearby King's Head there was a "Grand theatre of the Muse" fresh from its success in London. Some of the public houses in Norwich also advertised theatre. Before the Theatre Royal opened in 1758 the Company of Comedians regularly played at the White Swan and even after 1758 some inns continued to play host to various troupes of players. In 1779, for example, the Young Spouters played the Merchant of Venice at a public house near St Stephen's gate, only to have their performance rudely terminated when the floor collapsed.[30]

Another function of the public house was as a base for the social activities of many of the organisations discussed in the previous chapter. Trading companies and societies often had their annual dinners at an inn or an alehouse. In June 1777, for example, the Drapers of Coventry dined at the White Bear while the Company of Weavers usually held their annual feast at the Rose and Crown. In Norwich the focal point of the shoemakers' celebrations on St Crispin's Day was the alehouse where the more paternal masters would treat their workmen. The early freemasons also made use of friendly inns. The first lodge in Norwich was at the

29. J.C.M July 14 1766, Oct 13 1766, June 22 1767, May 4 1772.

30. N.M Jan 2 1730-1, Nov 13 1779.

Maid's Head and in Coventry the original masonic brethren met at the Bird in the Hand for the feast of St John the Baptist their patron saint.[31]

The intimate associations of inns and alehouses with the world of politics in the early eighteenth century also had commercial overtones. The advent of large scale treating made it profitable for some innkeepers to be overtly associated with one or other of the political parties. In Coventry, for example, the Tories patronised the Star and the King's Head while the custom of the Whigs was given exclusively to the White Bear and the Bull. Elections were not the only time when the politically minded publicans could reap their sectarian harvest. The newly politicised holiday calendar presented many opportunities. In Norwich the Artillery Company - loosely described by Linda Colley as " the local Whig mafia " - often concluded their partisan festivities by retiring to the King's Head. At the opposite end of the political spectrum the True Blues of Coventry used the Ram at Ram bridge, where they held their annual dinner, to celebrate the Restoration in 1780.[32]

However sectarianism had its dangers for the urban innkeeper. Not only did he limit his market to the politically sympathetic, he also attracted the unwelcome attention of his, sometimes powerful, opponents. In the 1720's the victuallers of Norwich were liable to be

31. J.C.M June 1 1777, Nov 18 1776, June 22 1761: N.M Oct 27 1810.

32. P. Clark, The English Alehouse, p 237: Whitley, The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry, p 141: L. Colley, In Defiance of Oligarchy, p 156: N.M Nov 16 1733: J.C.M June 5 1780.

evicted from their tied houses if they voted differently from their suppliers, while in Coventry the magistrates often withheld or withdrew licences from those who campaigned against them.[33]

For the entrepreneur of leisure these were unnecessary irritations. As the eighteenth century progressed the innkeeper sacrificed party prejudice for respectability, "no longer regarded by the ruling class as the headquarters of an alternative world...[they were] seen increasingly as an informal buttress of the established order".[34] During the French Revolution respectability also came to imply loyalty. The alehouse keepers of Coventry and Norwich were quick to establish theirs. In 1791 106 of the 110 publicans in Coventry "signed a resolution expressing their attachment to the King and appreciation of the constitution." They declared that they would suffer no radical meetings or subversive language in their houses and also published the names of the four who would not sign "by way of reproach." [35] Similarly the inns of Norwich took on a distinctly loyalist complexion. While the Castle played host to the Friendly Corporation, the Maid's Head was the venue for meetings of the Constitutional Society.[36]

33. Clark, *Op Cit*, p 237; Poole, *Op Cit*, p 141.

34. Clark, *Op Cit*, p 222. The tendency towards respectability had been growing throughout the eighteenth century. In the 1730's Benjamin Mackerell had reported that the alehouses of the city were crowded, for "many persons of good fashion and credit...meet every night at one or other of the houses besides [those] filled with labouring workmen who go" there. Clark, *Op Cit*, p 226.

35. Whitley, *Op Cit*, p 211.

36. W.H.Jones, The Maid's Head: Its' History and Antiquities, pp 29-30.

The patronage of friendly and benefit societies provided an additional incentive to many public houses to cultivate a respectable image. They, after all, sought to instill such values in their membership. In this regard respectability, loyalty and commercialisation went hand in hand. Many friendly societies had upwards of one hundred members, a valuable and stable source of trade for the landlord. Furthermore the maintenance of a low and constitutional political profile also made commercial sense, allowing the publican both to escape the unwelcome attention of the authorities and to exploit his market to the full.

Apart from supplying ale to individual customers at times of popular rejoicing innkeepers were sometimes called upon to provide beer for the corporation who distributed it to some or all of the revellers. In 1777, for example, the treasurer of the Coventry Corporation made a payment for the ale supplied to the freemen on the King's birthday, while the accounts of the Norwich Corporation often recorded expenditure for beer on May Day and other special occasions.[37]

Innkeepers were only one of a number of tradesmen who benefitted from the patronage of the corporation at times of public rejoicing. Bonfires required carpenters, triumphal arches, joiners, and the horses in the civic parades blacksmiths. In Norwich one of the most frequent beneficiaries of urban ceremonial was the canonier who fired the great guns. In both cities

37. Corporation bills 1767-82 (C.C.R.O A.62):
Chamberlains' accounts 1663 - 1835 (N.N.R.O case 18
shelves b-d)

gunsmiths and chandlers profitted from the extra demand produced by popular festivity. Moreover a review of corporate and company accounts in both cities reveal additional payments to florists, bakers, butchers, stocking makers and metallurgists for services rendered at times of public ritual and popular rejoicing.[38]

The self-interest of many like these who benefitted from popular festivity would provide an important antidote to the growing criticism of such activity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Often it would provide a lifeline to a particular popular holiday under attack. The Godiva Procession, for example, was periodically revived by the alehouse keepers of Spon End in Coventry, much to the disgust of the clerics who thought they had seen the last of it.[39]

There were, however, more altruistic reasons to defend collective rejoicing. The "public interest" would figure prominently in the arguments of those who supported such activity. Those using such arguments could point, for example, to the profits made by the textile industry of both cities on certain occasions of rejoicing and ritual. The silk ribbon trade of Coventry, for example, received an important boost from every civic

38. M.C.B 16 Oct 1695, 30 May 1696: N.M Oct 18 1746: Chamberlain's account book 1648-63, 1663-73, 1731-2 (N.N.R.O case 18 shelves b and c): Chamberlain's vouchers (N.N.R.O case 21 shelf a box 6): St George's waste books (N.N.R.O case 18 shelf b rep 35: Chamberlains's accounts 1730-1, 1755-6, 1769, 1785 (N.N.R.O case 18 shelf b) 1799-1800, 1814-15, 1815-16, 1834-5: Chamberlain's account books (C.C.R.O A.7 (b) and (c)): Bills for corporation dinners 1767-85 (C.C.R.O A.62): Treasurers Books of payments and receipts (C.C.R.O A.36/ a and b): Sheriffs accounts (W.R.O QS 63/67).

39. See chapter ten.

procession. The festivities which accompanied local and general elections also brought important benefits for this native trade. A clause in the election expenses act of 1827 which sought to ban the use of silk ribbons on such occasions was vigorously opposed by Mr Fyler, one of the representatives for the city. He argued that the local weavers stood to lose up to £100,000 per at each election if it was passed.[40]

In Norwich the bombasine and crepe manufacturers stood to benefit on a similar scale from the death of a national figure. The mourning which followed the death of a member of the royal family, for example, led to a huge increase in demand for the solemn cloth they produced. Indeed on the death of Princess Charlotte in 1817 the Bury Post suggested that the manufacturers of bombasine in Norwich "eagerly awaited" the profits which would result from the national tragedy. It was not long before the London Times was moved to intervene noting that

All the cities and towns that heard the melancholy news seem to have been deeply impressed with the magnitude of the national loss, Norwich alone, excepted, whose conduct will excite no little surprise and contempt.

The apoplectic rage of the authorities and the press in Norwich which greeted this charge could not hide its essential truth. The Norwich trade did benefit from such events. Indeed the organisation of a Crepe ball nine years later to provide a stimulus for the depressed trade

40. Whitley, Op Cit, p 283.

confirmed the capacity of public ceremonial to increase it.[41]

In a happier and a more seasonal vein the turkey industry of Norfolk did particularly well out of the Christmas festivities. Every December the London mail coach was filled with turkeys for sale in the capital. On its return it carried barrels of Oysters from Colchester and various delicacies from London. It was a two way trade but the balance of the benefit was clearly in Norfolk's favour. In 1810 thirty three tons of turkey were sent to London in the week before Christmas. The Norwich Mercury estimated the value of the trade at £5,500. In 1817 the paper confidently asserted that, despite the temporary depression in the export of turkey and game to the capital, "eating is a trade which seldom fails, and there is little doubt of its reviving rapidly, together with the other symptoms of national prosperity." [42]

In addition to such sectional interests the supporters of popular holiday could also point to events which brought economic benefits for the entire community. Of these fairs were the most obvious. Despite the increasing number of shops fairs remained as an important form of retailing during the eighteenth century. In Norfolk, where because of the county's geographical isolation they were necessary and numerous, the number of fairs may have grown in the eighteenth century. An "accurate list of the fairs in the county of Norfolk"

41. N.M Nov 15 1817, Nov 22 1817, Jan 7 1826.

42. Charles Hardy, Memories of Norwich and its inhabitants fifty years ago, p 39 : N.M. Jan 13 1810, Dec 27 1817.

drawn up in 1769 recorded 103 such events. By 1833 the recorded number had risen to 133. Likewise the fairs in Coventry underwent a commercial revival in the period as a whole. The introduction of the Godiva Procession increased the value of the Trinity fair and in 1744 there was an attempt to establish a new August cheese fair in the city.[43]

Ian Mitchell has attempted to explain the continuing relevance of fairs in this period in terms of "the ease of entry to non-fixed shop retailing and the inherent flexibility of those types of retailing for which little capital was required." Certainly it is true that pedlars, hawkers and petty chapmen continued to take full advantage of the numerous fairs in the Midlands and East Anglia. As a body they seem to have grown in both numbers and status although they continued to provide the authorities of Norwich and Coventry with problems. The warning provided by the Corporation of Norwich in November 1722 against "people hawking about the town, with spice, earthenware and other goods to the great detriment of the fair trader" gives proof of the continued if unwelcome vitality of the "non-fixed shop" retailer in the eighteenth century.[44]

Fairs and markets presented many other problems for the authorities of both cities, not least the pressure on the limited urban space which resulted. This was a particular problem in Coventry where the medieval

43. C&R C 394.6: Kemble's list of fairs, 1769 (C&R C 8b): N.M April 4 1931, "Tombland fairs" by E.W.Priest: V.C.H Warwks vol 8, p 165.

44. Ian Mitchell, "The development of urban retailing" in P. Clark (ed), The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, p 204: N.M Nov 24 1722.

streets were extremely narrow. As early as 1700, following a list of regulations to prevent the "great disorders" committed at the Friday market, an order appeared in the Leet Book which instructed "all pedlars, hawkers and pettie chapmen keeping stalls within the city on any faire day" to confine their displays to two streets. Overcrowding often led to disorder and clashes between those attending the fair and the authorities who sought to control it. Accordingly the Coventry Council was moved in 1705 to promise that those officers involved in the execution of the Leet's orders for the better ordering of the city's fairs would be indemnified. In the following century much of the antagonism towards the Godiva Procession resulted from the noise, disruption and confusion which accompanied the Trinity fair. In Norwich the Corporation showed a similar concern to minimise the problems which resulted from the few large fairs which took place in the city. In April 1750, for example the Council removed the horse fair from St Faith's lane to the Castle Ditches in the hope of confining the associated disruption. In 1826 Magdalen fair was abolished because of the "diverse tumults and riotous proceedings".[45]

For most of the period, however, Magdalen and the rest of the fairs in Norwich and Coventry continued to enjoy the majority support of the community. There are two reasons why this was so. Firstly such events provided

45 The Second Leet Book (C.C.R.O A.3) Oct 16 1666, April 25 1700: Council Minute Book (C.C.R.O A.14(c)) p 95 April 2 1702: N.M June 2 1750: "The diverse tumults and riotous proceedings of old Magdalen fair", in Norfolk Fair 1980 p 14.

a valued social focus for the normally disparate agricultural communities which surrounded Norwich and Coventry. Social as well as economic considerations lay behind the campaign of "many gentlemen, farmers, graziers and others" to have the fairs on the 26th August and the second Friday after Ash Wednesday in Coventry revived after they had fallen into disuse in the late 1790's and early 1800's. Furthermore we have already seen that in Norwich the first day of St Faith's fair was reserved for fraternization and frolics, while Tombland fair was primarily a social occasion.[46]

Secondly, and more importantly, fairs continued to bring economic benefits to the cities of Norwich and Coventry. Many local tradesmen gained financially from the influx of company. At the time of the Tombland fair, in 1817, for example, one Mr Wilson, a confectioner of Queen Steet, Norwich, announced that "flattered by the great demand he experienced last year for his genuine Diss bread...[he would provide]...more than the usual quantity of the finest flavour and quality." Mercers, drapers, grocers, and, indeed, all the shopkeepers of Norwich and Coventry would have stood to benefit from the increased number of visitors during the time of a fair. Furthermore if the mountain would not come to Mohammed, Mohammed, in the shape of the eighteenth century entrepreneur, could go to the mountain. In 1735, for example, Thomas Richards and Thomas Monday, publicans at the King's Head and the Elephant respectively, joined forces to run the "Great Booth" at St Faith's fair

46. V.C.H Warwks vol 8, p 165: See chapter three.

promising " to have neat wines and brandy and as good eating as the place will admit." In general, however, local publicans made a sufficient profit by staying put. With no licensing hours they enjoyed unlimited access to an eager market.[47]

By far the greatest interest in the continuing prosperity of fairs in Norwich and Coventry was that of the local agricultural community. The main business of the fair was, after all, the sale of agricultural produce. The experience of the Rev Dr Sutton of the parish of St George Tombland in the 1830's sheds some light on how the commercial interest of the farming community could be translated into support for a popular holiday under attack. Fresh from a campaign against St Bartholemew's fair in London, Dr Sutton entered the fray against the fair at Tombland on Maundy Thursday. Expressly, but perhaps ostensibly, concerned that those attending his church on Good Friday should have to walk through the mess left by the previous day's revellers he attempted to have the date of the fair changed. He failed dismally as, in the words of his good friend and fellow cleric Charles Hardy, " the agricultural interest was too strong and thwarted all his efforts." [48]

Much of the criticism which was directed at fairs in early nineteenth century Norwich and Coventry was deflected by the clear economic benefits which resulted from such events. Of equal commercial value to the city of Norwich was the Summer assize. Like the fairs the assize offered particular commercial opportunities to

47. N.M March 29 1817, Oct 4 1735.

48. Charles Hardy, Op Cit, p 43.

city traders and entertainers. In 1725 William Chase used the opportunity to open a bookstall, while two years later the Company of Comedians could be found performing at the King's Head as was usual at that time of the year. Assemblies and plays were annual features of the week. The public gardens also took advantage of the influx of genteel company to the city. In 1810 Ranelagh Gardens offered the usual comprehensive range of daily entertainments, beginning with breakfast, followed by a concert and concluded, in the evening, by fireworks and illuminations. Moreover many who attended the assize in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century used the opportunity to purchase particular provisions and other goods which, within East Anglia, only Norwich could supply. [49]

The economic value of the twice yearly county assize is clear from the struggle between Norwich and Thetford, which hosted the Lent assize, to obtain both. In the late seventeenth century Thetford attempted to have the summer assize transferred from Norwich. Norwich protested vigorously and in 1696 a meeting of the Lord Justices of England concluded that

if the assizes were not kept as usual at Norwich, none of the gentlemen would attend, and it would in all probability occasion a great disturbance in that city, which it is hardly restrained from already by reason of the clipped money and the manufacturers unemployed. [50]

49. N.M July 10 1725, July 29 1727, Aug 18 1810.
50. C.S.P.D June 27 1696.

By the late eighteenth century, however, the ball was in the Norwich court. Its position as the regional capital had been strengthened in the century following Thetford's original petition and, in 1788, there was a proposal for a county meeting to "take into consideration the proper measures to effect the removal of the Lent assizes to Norwich." Now it was Thetford's turn to lobby against transferring both events to one city. In 1819 the town presented a petition to Parliament arguing that the Winter assize "had for several centuries been held once a year at Thetford, and it was of considerable importance to the western parts of Norfolk that this practice should not be discontinued." It was not until 1832 that Norwich succeeded in capturing its prize. Its efforts in this regard were richly rewarded and, in April 1835, the Norwich Mercury was able to report that the large influx of company for the Lent assize meant that the city "exhibited a more than ordinary vitality throughout all its engagements." [51]

Within the context of the holiday calendar both the fair and the assize can be regarded as "festivals of leisure". The commerce of the fair and the judicial business of the assize provided a functional nucleus around which a whole range of recreational and social activities developed. It is also possible to view race-meetings in this manner. A look at the development of horseracing in Norwich and Coventry will serve to strengthen the notion that popular rejoicing and public ritual was of distinct commercial value. However it will

51. N.M. July 5 1788, Feb 27 1819, June 9 1832, April 4 1835.

also serve as a reminder of the physical and ideological barriers to the full commercial exploitation of the holiday calendar; barriers which would increase in size during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[52]

Horse racing had its origins as a large scale, public and rule bound sport in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The patronage of King James I provided it with a welcome and an early boost. Like provincial theatre, however, horseracing fell out of favour in the second and third quarters of the seventeenth century; puritan attitudes, a magnified fear of public disorder and the related concern that meetings might excite political tensions among a divided elite combined to depress the sport for nearly fifty years. However from 1680 to 1730, with political tensions and social controls relaxed, horseracing experienced a renaissance. The number of meetings, the days of racing and the commercial value of the sport all increased in this period.[53]

In Norwich the first race meeting was held in 1710. However it did not become an annual event. Despite having a natural racecourse in the form of Mousehold Heath, the geographical isolation of Norwich and the overbearing concentration of men, money and horses, within East Anglia, at Newmarket militated against the growth of the sport in the city.

The next meeting did not take place until 1738 when three days of racing were advertised for the Monday,

52. McKendrick et al, Op Cit, p 275

53. Borsay, Thesis, pp 337-42

Tuesday and Wednesday of Whit week. The third meeting took place in 1740. Once again Whitsuntide provided the occasion for the event although there were now four days of racing. The prizes offered were substantial; the amount in the purse increased each day from thirty pounds on the Monday to fifty pounds on the Thursday.[54]

Money for the prizes was raised by subscription. Although some gentry and local magistrates contributed the bulk of the money came from tradesmen, in general, and innkeepers, in particular. One means of ensuring an adequate financial base for the venture was the provision that only those contributing one guinea or more towards the subscription would be allowed to run a booth on the course. In 1740 there were fifty booths on the heath built at a cost of some two thousand pounds.[55]

The tradesmen and innkeepers of Norwich treated the cost of the subscription and the expense of erecting the booths as an investment. They clearly believed that the numbers and the "quality" of people attracted to the city for the races would make that investment worthwhile. They were right; in 1738 twenty thousand people attended the highlight of the week's racing, while in 1740 that figure had doubled. Nobles and gentry from Norfolk and further a field were among those who arrived in Norwich for the meeting. In 1740 the Norwich Mercury "believed that there will be a very grand appearance of the nobility and the gentry from London and several other

54. Borsay, Thesis, p 360: N.M March 25 1738, March 31 1740.

55. N.M April 15 1738, June 2 1740.

parts of the kingdom. Lodging already being taken out at several places." [56]

As at the assize such genteel company generated a whole host of other social activities, all of which made profit for those who provided them. In 1738 and 1740 the Red Lion, the landlord of which seems to have been one of the main supporters of the races in the city, advertised ordinaries, cockfighting and a generally "good reception for man and horse during the time of the races." In 1740 the commercially adept company of comedians returned from Beccles specifically to perform on race nights. That year there were also two assemblies and a visit by Mr Parry, "one of the finest performers in the world on the treble welch harp", who came to the city to play, specifically, for the "quality and gentry." [57]

The meeting of 1740 was the last at Norwich in the eighteenth century. 1740 was a key year in the development of horse racing as a national sport. A temporary unpopularity among the social elite, a fit of moral indignation and a growing concern about public disorder on the eve of war with Spain, led to the introduction and the passage of a parliamentary bill "to restrain and prevent the excessive increase of horse races." The most important clause was one which forbade any race for less than a fifty pound purse. Its practical effect was the immediate elimination of many small rural

56. N.M May 27 1738, June 16 1740, June 2 1740.

57. N.M April 15 1738, March 31 1740, May 12 1740, May 26 1740, June 9 1740.

meetings and a dramatic decline in the total number of racing days in the decade following the act.[58]

There seems no reason why this act, of itself, should lead to the end of racing in Norwich. As a major provincial capital Norwich could have easily afforded to offer a minimum purse of fifty pounds. Furthermore the economic benefits produced by a meeting must have been clear to all those who subscribed in 1738 and 1740. But it does seem that in combination with traditional concerns about the moral and political consequences of racing, the savage competition of Newmarket and the geographical isolation of Norwich the act effectively destroyed any remaining enthusiasm for the sport in the city.

Norwich was not, therefore, able to exploit the revival of racing in the 1750's. However Coventry was able to participate in this new equestrian boom. The first race meeting in that city was in 1705. But it was not until 1755 that a second attempt was made to establish horseracing as a regular event. All was going well until in July the organisers were forced to cancel the advertised event because of a " sudden change of mind" by the Corporation who had originally agreed to the use of Cheylesmore park. Despite this set back a new attempt was made in 1759 when two days of racing were advertised for August of that year. Once again, however, the organisers had to abandon the attempt after the Corporation withdrew their permission.[59]

58. Borsay, Thesis, pp 343-5.

59. J.C.M July 20 1755, June 16 1759.

Although the organisers were obviously frustrated at this second rebuff they continued their efforts and a race meeting was held in 1760. The event clearly enjoyed a wide range of social patronage. Lord Archer was both steward and subscriber and apart from his prize the horses ran for the " gentlemen's subscription" and the " town purse." As at Norwich in the 1730's the influx of the local gentry generated a round of commercially beneficial social engagements. Once again the role of the innkeepers was vital. On successive days there were ordinaries at the King's Head, the Rose and Crown and the Black Bull while a special feast was held every day for the ladies at the Coach and Horses. Each evening there was an assembly at the King's Head which also played host to the daily cockfights.[60]

The two other meetings in the eighteenth century were in 1767 and 1783. On the latter occasion company flocked to the city for the event which, in the words of the Coventry Mercury, " far exceeded anything ever seen at Coventry on a similar occasion." Nobility and gentry figured prominently among those who attended the races. Again the event enjoyed broad social support. Lord Sheffield was the steward while William Conway, his fellow representative for the city, was among a crowd which included Lord and Lady Beaumont and Lady Harnet Herbert.

By this stage it is clear that the race week was also regarded as a popular, if irregular, holiday. The local artisans stayed away from work on the days of

the racing and they were so keen to continue their unusual leisure that they organised a race for a silver cup on the Thursday after the formal end of the meeting. The festivities were brought to a tragic end, however, when a seven year old girl was killed by a runaway horse.[61]

The meeting of 1783 was the last to take place at Coventry during the eighteenth century. The immediate cause for its termination was the transfer of the lease for Cheylesmore park from the Corporation to Viscount Beachamp. Although he attended the races in 1783 he, like many other landlords or private tenants, would not have relished the prospect of horses pounding his land. In the early nineteenth century he bought the park outright. When the races were revived in 1834 they took place in a different part of the city.[62]

But it is also clear that there was a more deeply rooted hostility to horse racing in Coventry. The death of a seven year old girl and the indiscipline of the artisans at the races of 1783 confirmed old fears about the disruptive effects of the sport. Furthermore in a city where Nonconformity thrived the magistrates had a particular concern for the immorality which a racemeeting induced. Of special concern was the gambling which invariably accompanied horseracing. In 1755, just three months after the first abortive attempt to organise racing in the city, the Mayor Elect issued a proclamation against "vice, prophaneness and immorality" in which he

61. J.C.M Aug 17 1767, Sept 8 1783.

62. V.C.H (Warwks) Vol 8 p 236. In 1834 they took place at Stoke Heath.

made known his intention to suppress horse racing and other sports which encouraged gambling. [63]

The rather erratic history of horse racing at Coventry suggests some of the obstacles to the full economic exploitation of popular holiday, even in one of its most obviously commercial forms. The perceived indiscipline and immorality which arose from this and other "festivals of leisure" would fuel the arguments of the increasingly articulate enemies of popular holiday in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However the undoubted, if temporary and sporadic, success of racing in attracting such a quantity and quality of company to a normally pedestrian city also underlines the economic value of many forms of rejoicing, ritual and recreation. The cause of popular holiday would be well served by those who felt there were good commercial reasons for supporting it, even if, in the long term, their arguments were drowned by a rising tide of respectable anguish and an increasing concern for labour discipline.

63. Hewitt's Journal, p 41. In 1782 the magistrates of Warwick followed his lead by announcing their determination to destroy all gaming tables at the forthcoming races.

Chapter Six.

Politics, Popular Rejoicing and the Language of the Holiday Crowd. 1660 - 1746.

The popular holiday calendar presented political as well as commercial opportunities. Indeed John Brewer has gone so far as to state that, in the eighteenth century, "politics was essentially a calendrical market." [1] However annual holidays were not the only occasion for political rejoicing. Events outside of the holiday calendar also presented opportunities in this respect. The failure or success of different parliamentary campaigns, the news of a victory at war or the declaration of a hard won peace were just some of the more extraordinary occasions for rejoicing and ritual.

To look at the political dimensions of public festivity over a period of one hundred and seventy five years is a daunting task. In these years the very political culture of the United Kingdom changed. Indeed the Kingdom itself was transformed with, first, the addition of Scotland in 1707 and, second, the incorporation of Ireland in 1801. Nevertheless not to do so would be foolhardy, not to say negligent. For the fact was that, in these years, rejoicing and ritual was part of the very fabric of local and national politics. In an age when most men and women were illiterate, it provided the

1. McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb, The Birth of a Consumer Society, p 247.

ultimate symbolic battleground upon which issues of vital importance to national life were fought out.

As such it attracted the attention of a staggering variety of political sects, parties and institutions. All were intent on using the medium for what Steven Lukes has called "the mobilisation of bias" in their favour.[2] It is with the questions of how and why this was done with which this and the following chapter will be chiefly concerned.

Because of the length of the period and the variety of the issues involved this study of politics and popular holiday will be divided into two chapters. The first will look at the period from the Restoration to the second Jacobite rebellion and the second will cover the years to the reform of the corporations in 1835. 1746 has been chosen as the dividing point for several reasons. Firstly, and most obviously, it splits the period into two fairly equal parts. Secondly, and most importantly, because the end of the second Jacobite rebellion led to a change in the form and the function of the celebrations which formed the core of the shared holiday calendar examined in chapter three. This was most apparent in relation to the anniversaries of the Restoration and the Martyrdom which declined rapidly once the dynastic ambitions of the Stuarts had been dashed.

The third, and most contentious, reason for choosing 1746 as a cut off point is to reflect my

2. S. Lukes, Essays in Social Theory, p 73. That is a bias towards "that set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals [sic] and constitutional procedures that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at other's expense."

disagreement with the traditional tripartite division of the eighteenth century into a period of partisan strife (pre 1715), a period of stability (1715-60) and a period of renewed conflict (post 1760). The recent work of, Colley, Clark and Hill, among others, has helped to destroy this rather neat historiographical edifice. As a result of their joint, if divergent, endeavours it is clear that there was no end to partisan strife in 1715, that the years to 1760 were characterised by growth and turmoil not stability or stasis, and that the political changes which occurred at the accession of George III had their roots in the previous two decades. I hope to be able to incorporate some of these ideas into this analysis, and by doing so, focus on the elements of continuity as well as change in the political exploitation of popular festivity.[3]

The Restoration provoked great demonstrations of joy in both Norwich and Coventry. On May 10th the news of the Convention Parliament's decision to invite Charles to become the next King reached Norwich. The Corporation immediately planned a " solemn parade" for the following day. However the populace had different, more extravagant ideas. For several days after the arrival of the joyous news there were bonfires in the streets and eventually the magistrates had to step in to restore public order.[4]

3. L.Colley, In Defiance of Oligarchy; The Tory Party 1714-60, pp 290-1: B.Hill, British Parliamentary Parties 1742-1832, p 1X: J.C.D.Clark, English Society 1688-1832, p 151.

4. J.T. Evans, Seventeenth Century Norwich - Politics, Religion and Government 1620-1690, p 226.

In Coventry a huge feast at St Mary's Hall followed the proclamation of the Restoration at the cross by the Mayor. The citizens greeted the news with great enthusiasm. According to Thomas Whitley, Tory, antiquarian and royalist,

they seemed "almost frantic" with excitement and amidst "the cheers, firing of salutes, ringing of bells, beating of drums, braying of trumpets and bonfires in every street" a contagion siezed the people.[5]

That contagion was not confined to Norwich and Coventry; nearly every city, town and village in the land celebrated the return of the Stuart dynasty.

Whitley explained the enthusiasm of the Coventry crowd in terms of their hope for relief from the "oppressive taxation" of the interregnum. There were also less material reasons for their joy. Puritan rule had been characterised by unprecedented social and moral regulation involving a concerted attack on many of the best loved aspects of the people's culture. The Restoration represented a new start. To quote David Underdown

The King's return symbolised the recovery of civic harmony and order after twenty years of conflict and confusion, and the restoration of the national social hierarchy...The fountains running with wine, the cakes and ale, proclaimed the return of the old customs of hospitality and good neighbourhood; the processional pageantry, the flags, drums and trumpets were affirmations of a sense of community that puritan reformers had tried vainly to suppress.[6]

5. T. Whitley, The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry, pp 100-1

6. D. Underdown, Revel, Riot and Rebellion, p 271-2.

It was neither the first nor the last time that popular rejoicing and public ritual would play a role in turning the world the right way up once more.

Apart from this corrective function the public celebrations of the Restoration acted chiefly as a display of loyalty. The participation of the magistracy in that display was particularly important. Their symbolic assent was needed to legitimate the new King in the eyes of the people. Of course there was more than a touch of irony in their new-found enthusiasm for the person and the institution of the monarchy. It had only been two years, after all, since the Corporation of Norwich had congratulated Oliver Cromwell on his "benevolent rule", while the magistrates of Coventry had been among the most zealous supporters of the old regime. But dynastic politics sometimes required somersaults and the rulers of Norwich and Coventry were determined to do the necessary gymnastics with style.

It was important that they did so. One of the traditional functions of the magistracy was to act as a medium between the local community they represented and the awful power of the sovereign.[7] The public celebrations and the gifts which both corporations presented to their new King served to deflect his righteous anger at his recently rebellious subjects. For Norwich the ploy was totally successful. But for Coventry the King reserved a particular spleen. One of the signatures on his father's death warrant was that of

7. Charles Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City; Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages, pp 140-1.

Colonel Purefoy. one of the city's parliamentary representatives, and in many other ways Coventry had been a particularly sharp thorn in the Stuart side in recent years. In retaliation Charles withheld the lease of Cheylesmore Park and ordered that the walls be torn down as a sign of royal displeasure. However by conferring a knighthood on Richard Hopkins, city steward and bearer of the city's gift of plate and money, he signalled that, for a price, he would forgive even his most contrary subjects.[8]

Rejoicing and ritual as a manifestation of loyalty was never clearer than on the occasion of a royal visit. Tudor and Stuart monarchs made periodical visits to the larger provincial centres. They did so for several reasons. Firstly it allowed the monarch to keep in touch with his or her subjects. In London the monarch's main source of advice and information was the Privy Council. News and views were passed on at the discretion of its necessarily politic membership. Trips outside of the capital allowed the King or Queen to assess the situation for themselves. Secondly these periodical visits allowed the monarch to be seen. This was important in a society which retained a highly personal conception of monarchy. If the power of the Law as a whole was increased by its visual splendour, this was no less true of the King, the source of its majesty, justice and mercy. Finally these provincial visits gave the monarch some idea of the physical nature of the Kingdom that he or she ruled. In

that sense they fulfilled a similar function to the perambulation of a city, a town or a parish.

The visit of Charles II to Norwich in 1671 was made, very much in this latter, perambulatory, vein. The Treaty of Dover (1670) with France committed England to an attack on Holland. In preparation for that commitment Charles decided to inspect the major seaports of his country. It seems that the visit to Norwich, despite its status as the second city in the Kingdom, was incidental to the inspection of Yarmouth. Indeed it may have been included in the itinerary at the last moment. Certainly the authorities of Norwich were caught unawares by the proposed visit and the week beforehand was spent in frantic preparation. The city regiment was drawn up on the preceeding Monday for inspection by the Duke of Norfolk, the inhabitants of the castle ditches were ordered to clean up any dunghills and similar nuisances and a free market was declared to ensure that there would be ample provision for the "great confluence of people" who would flock to the city to see their King.

The royal visit provoked an unusual display of total corporate unity. The King was met by representatives of the people, the church and the nobility; the Mayor, the sheriffs, the aldermen, the Bishop of Norwich, the Dean and the Chapter of the Cathedral and the (usually absentee) Duke of Norfolk were just the principal members of the cavalcade which met him at the "bounds of the city liberties". After a formal welcome by the Recorder Charles was presented with two hundred guineas as a mark of the city's loyalty,

love, and, no doubt, status. The cavalcade then proceeded to the Duke's palace where the King was joined by the Queen who had come from London. Both had encountered some difficulty by virtue of the "incredible numbers of people" who had lined the route, held in check only by the city regiment which the monarch reviewed at the approach to the palace.

On the following morning the King went to the market place where he touched for the "King's evil". This was a traditional and symbolic affirmation of the unique divine favour with the monarch enjoyed. This practice would later become an important part of the Jacobite appeal in the years following the Glorious Revolution, particularly in the light of the refusal by William and the Hanoverian monarchs to continue the tradition. After visiting the Cathedral the royal couple then proceeded to the New Hall where they enjoyed a sumptuous banquet. At the end of the feast the King knighted Thomas Browne, the famous Norwich physician. Charles offered the same honour to the Mayor but he humbly refused. The visit finished with the presentation of a valedictory gift of fifty and one hundred guineas to the King and Queen respectively.[9]

A more overtly political reason lay behind the visit of James II to Coventry in 1687. In his eagerness to win freedom for his fellow Catholics James had

9. D. Turner, Narrative of the visit of...King Charles to Norwich...1671, (1846). It seems that the valedictory gift was seen as a necessary addition to the purse presented to the King at his arrival. The hurried manner in which the original gift was prepared adds to the suspicion that Norwich was only told of Charles's proposed visit at the last moment.

recently rejected his traditional Tory and Anglican allies in favour of the, by and large, Dissenting Whigs. The visit to Coventry, a stronghold of Dissent and Whiggery, was one element in his campaign to win them over. In return for their support he offered toleration for all but the most radical Nonconformists.

Despite their justifiable suspicion of James's motives, the people and the rulers of Coventry were keen to impress the monarch with their loyalty. There were many similarities between the reception given to James and that given to his brother at Norwich sixteen years before. Like the Corporation of Norwich, the Council at Coventry ordered extensive preparations for the visit. In the belief that James would stay at White Friars the council instructed the households along the way to whitewash their walls, to spread sand on the streets and to place green boughs at their door. The Council also commissioned a gold cup, costing £ 171, which was presented to James when he arrived.

The political nature of this exercise in royal diplomacy was apparent from the start. The day before his arrival the royal harbinger announced that James would prefer to stay at the house of Richard Hopkins, son of the knighted steward and leader of the Whigs in the city. Moreover in response to James's overtures two hundred dissenters rode out to Meriden to greet their monarch who, in return, "showed them great respect." Meanwhile the Mayor, aldermen, companies and waits stayed at the county boundary.

The King arrived in the city at about five in the evening. After a formal welcome from the steward, the Mayor presented the sword, symbol of the devolved royal authority to James who promptly returned it, and in doing so re-confirmed the city's corporate freedom. The Mayor and the senior alderman, with the sword and the cap of maintenance before them, then led the cavalcade to the house of Richard Hopkins where the King spent the night. In the morning James attempted to ingratiate himself with the common people of the city when he went, via the churches of Holy Trinity and St Michael, to the cross where he touched for the "King's evil". He laid hands on over three hundred people; an indication of the continuing popularity of the ceremony. The visit ended with a vast feast at St Mary's hall and the offer of a knighthood to Richard Hopkins, who, like the Mayor of Norwich before him, humbly declined the honour.[10]

The similarities with the ceremony at Norwich were no accident. Ritual is after all, largely a formula or, to quote Steven Lukes, "rule governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance." [11] The reception at the city bounds, the presentation of a gift, the highly formal speech of greeting, the touching for the "King's evil" and the knighthoods offered only to be refused, were all calculated to encourage loyalty, humility and affection. The royal visit also served to confirm

10. F. Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva, "Annals of the city of Coventry" pp 258-9.

11. S. Lukes, Op Cit, p 54.

traditional, but mostly latent, attitudes within and towards the community as a whole.

Despite bringing such obvious and important benefits the royal visit declined as a ritual form during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The increasing concentration of political power at Westminster, the improvements in the machinery of the state and the advent of the provincial newspaper made such visits unnecessary from the monarch's point of view. Furthermore the first two Georges, in particular, were ill-disposed to venture beyond the confines of their court; speaking little English and with less charisma they preferred to remain aloof from their people.

The use of rejoicing and ritual to win the loyalty of the common people was perhaps the most calculated way in which public festivity was exploited. But popular rejoicing and public ritual was a two edged sword; it could equally be used for subversive ends. This was certainly the case in Coventry during the 1680's where, after years of relentless interference in the city's affairs by the later Stuarts, a popular and radical opposition had developed.

Perhaps the most serious manifestation of that opposition occurred in 1682 on the occasion of a visit by the Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II and dynastic rival to James, Duke of York. On September 7th he arrived in the city and stayed for the night at the Star. He was given a King's welcome; "many hundreds"

of the citizens met him at the city bounds and, in the evening, there were numerous bonfires on the city streets. In the eyes of central government this was intolerable. Monmouth had gone north to regenerate the support he had enjoyed during the exclusion crisis when he was put forward as an alternative heir to Charles's throne. Charles had only curtailed this unwelcome challenge to his brother's divine right by dissolving parliament and embarking on a fresh campaign against Dissenters and the recalcitrant corporations, including Coventry, in which many of them served. The reception given to his wayward son was calculated to enrage the establishment; as a result nineteen were indicted for riot.[12]

The line between rejoicing and riot was thin. Whether it had been crossed was largely a matter for interpretation by the city magistrates. Not surprisingly their decisions were often more partisan than judicious. In 1685, for example, when one of the Whig candidates at the general election in Coventry sent forty pounds for his "friends" to celebrate Shrove Tuesday the magistrates promptly intervened to stop the subsequent "disorder". In a letter to the Secretary of State Lord Brooke congratulated the magistrates of the city "who will I hope hinder his further proceedings." [13]

The behaviour of the holiday crowd at Coventry was clearly a matter of continuing concern to the central

12. R.Clifton, The Last Popular Rebellion, pp 135-6, 140: Whitley, Op Cit, p 111: C.S.P.D Sept 20 1682. The nineteen were only saved by the King's pardon. Charles's intervention was just one more example of his highly changeable feelings towards his errant son.

13. C.S.P.D March 6 1685.

government. In June 1688, just nine months after the apparently successful visit by James, Sunderland, the Secretary of State, found it necessary to communicate the news of the birth of an heir to James II to the magistrates of Coventry and Warwickshire. Sunderland advised them "to take care that such public rejoicings be made on the day appointed as are suitable and accustomed." The absence of celebrations on this occasion would have been just as subversive as their profusion at the time of Monmouth's visit just three years before.[14]

In contrast to the subversive bias in the conduct of rejoicing and ritual at Coventry, public festivity in Norwich continued to act as a means of establishing individual or communal loyalty. This reflected a comparatively easy relationship between the local corporation and the central government in the years after the Restoration. In 1685, for example, there was an extravagant celebration in Norwich to mark the end of Monmouth's rebellion, while in October of that year the King's birthday provoked unusual demonstrations of loyalty and joy.

The first evidence of popular holiday as a medium for political struggle within the city of Norwich is from April 1696 when the Mayor organised particularly vigorous celebrations on the day of thanksgiving for the King's narrow escape from a recent attempt on his life. This followed accusations of disloyalty from the Company of Weavers who, in pursuit of a campaign to get the import of Indian silks and Bengalis banned, were intent

on showing particularly enthusiastic support for the recently formed association for the defence of the King. As a result they took an exception to a diplomatic attempt by the Mayor and common council to water down the language in the city's loyal address to the King. In particular they objected to the word "revenge" being replaced by the word "punish" and accused the Corporation of a lack of zeal in their determination that those responsible should be brought to justice. The Mayor responded by ordering that the thanksgiving day should be kept "in a more than ordinary manner." [15]

It is clear, then, that in the late seventeenth century popular rejoicing and public ritual was exploited for political, or more specifically, for dynastic ends. However it also has to be said that, in general, popular festivity was not used in this way. Most holidays in this period were just that; days for relaxation, meditation or indulgence. At least for the fifty years following the Restoration one can readily agree with Gareth Stedman Jones that "the primary point of a holiday is not political. It is to enjoy yourself, for tomorrow you must work." [16] It was only really from the second decade of the eighteenth century that it became an accepted arena for political struggle.

15. E.M.Thompson (ed), Letters of Humphrey Prideaux, April 17 1696, p 171.

16. G.S.Jones, "Class expression versus social control; a critique of recent trends in the social history of leisure." in History Workshop issue no.4 Autumn 1977, p 170. That said the following examination of the political holiday calendar in the early eighteenth century must lead to questions about the universal applicability of Stedman Jones's argument in this respect.

The politicisation of the popular holiday calendar was a direct consequence of the "rage of party" which began in the later years of Queen Anne. For most of her reign Anne had succeeded, with the help of Harley, Godolphin and Marlborough, in keeping party strife at an acceptable level. However the collapse of that triumvirate in 1708 ushered in what Dr Hill has called "the sharpest nonviolent conflict in the history of British parties since the Revolution." That conflict was fuelled by a deepening division over the conduct of the war of the Spanish succession, the belief of the Tories that the established church was in danger from powerful and Dissenting Whigs and the increasing urgency of the question of who was to succeed the heir-less Anne.[17]

The subsequent political conflict was not limited to Westminster or to general elections. In fact, as John Stevenson has observed, "the most usual occasions...[for partisan strife]...were royal anniversaries and the celebration of them by rival factions." [18] But it was not only royal anniversaries which provided occasion for sectarian struggle. The civic and political calendar also presented opportunities in this regard.

In fact the very first time that popular rejoicing and public ritual became a focus for partisan strife in Coventry was on the occasion of the mayoral inauguration in 1711. On All Saint's Day a group of Tories assembled at a public house near St Mary's Hall

17. B. Hill, British Parliamentary Parties 1689-1742, pp 91, 116-7.

18. J. Stevenson, Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1870, p 18.

where the new Whig Mayor was due to be sworn in. Their plan was to seize the sword and mace and, in doing so, to invalidate his election. However the Whigs got wind of the plan and deposited the civic regalia in a safe house elsewhere in the city to which they diverted the entire corporate entourage for the inauguration which took place in the adjacent street. The Mayor was then quickly escorted away from the furious and frustrated Tory crowd. [19]

The attempt of the Tories to capture the sword and the mace can only be understood within the context of the contemporary political culture. Civic regalia was important in every corporation. It was both a symbol of devolved royal authority and a means of providing the corporation with an immutable institutional identity separated and protected from the vicissitudes of the various holders of its offices. Moreover, in a closed corporation like Coventry, it took on an extra, almost magical, significance. With no popular mandate sought nor given, it provided one of the few means of legitimating the authority of the new chief magistrate in the eyes of the common people over which he had to exercise his power. If these symbolic artefacts could be captured the very legitimacy of the new Mayor would be thrown into question. [20]

In Norwich the first signs of the politicisation of the holiday calendar occurred in the following year. On May 31 1712 the Norwich Gazette noted

19. T. Whitley, *Op Cit*, pp 139-40.

20. P. Borsay, "All the town's a stage; urban ritual and ceremony." in P. Clark (ed), The Transformation of the English Provincial Town, p 240.

that the anniversary of the Restoration had been observed "by ringing of bells, bonfires and the like more loyally than for above twenty years past." The Gazette was a Tory paper and it was the Tories who were behind this popular revival. Two weeks later their festive ardour was again apparent, this time on the occasion of the return of the city's two Tory M.P's from Westminster. "Several hundreds of gentlemen and tradesmen" rode out from Norwich to Bungay to escort them back to their constituency. On the way the two representatives were serenaded with bells, trumpets and shouts of joy in every town through which they passed.[21]

Over the next three decades both political parties attempted to use popular rejoicing and public ritual for their own sectarian ends. In the nation at large the Tories were the first to develop their own festive repertoire. Their favourite anniversaries included the birthday of Queen Anne, the Restoration of Charles II and the accession of Queen Elizabeth I. The Whigs soon followed the Tory example and developed their own holiday calendar based around the twin anniversaries of the gunpowder plot and the landing of William of Orange at Torbay.[22] The choice of both parties in this respect reflected their deeply held and divergent attitudes towards the history of the English monarchy in the preceeding twenty five years, which in turn reflected the continuing importance of the dynastic question in eighteenth century politics. To fully appreciate the importance and the utility of popular rejoicing and

21. N.G May 31, June 14 1712.

22. Stevenson, Op Cit, p 18.

public ritual during this period we have, therefore, to spend some time on the origin and the nature of the conflict between the two parties.

Whig and Tory were the pejorative terms given to the two opposing parties during the exclusion crisis of 1679-81. While the Whigs opposed James's right to succeed on the grounds of his suspected conversion to Roman Catholicism, the Tories offered him unqualified support in line with their fundamental belief in the divine right of kings. Although the parties dissipated after the end of the crisis the ideological groundwork had been laid for a far more serious dynastic struggle. Finding James to be an increasingly untrustworthy monarch those who had originally opposed his right to succeed, and some of those who had supported it, began to look elsewhere and, in particular, to the House of Orange for an alternative. Thus, in late 1688, William was invited to take James's place. The reason given by the Convention Parliament was that James had deserted the throne. In fact many Whigs were quite happy to justify the Glorious Revolution as an exercise in resistance to a tyrannical monarch. However the Tories could not adopt this stance.[23] In the struggle to secure James's right to succeed to his brother's throne they had committed themselves to the divine right of Kings; the Glorious Revolution was a rude denial of that right.

Tory doubts over the propriety of the Revolution were of little immediate practical importance. Many Tories submitted to the "de facto" if not the "de

23. Hill, British Parliamentary Parties 1689-1742, pp 21-3, 33-5.

jure" authority of William and Mary. Their road to compromise was made somewhat easier by the fact that both Mary and Anne were Stuarts. But with the death of Anne the inconsistency of the long held Tory position became clear. How could they support the Hanoverian succession when James II or his son, Charles Edward, were ready, willing and able to take up the throne to which they had an indisputable divine right? The answer, of course, is that many did not.

The question of Jacobitism, in general, and Tory Jacobitism, in particular, has long been ignored by historians of eighteenth century politics. One reason for such indifference is the difficulty of assessing the extent of popular support for the Stuarts. Indeed it is impossible to quantify Jacobite strength. Given the severe penalties which existed, few would openly and individually admit support for the exiled family. Even the slightest hint of Jacobitism excited the authorities to act. In 1697, for example, a report from Norwich that one Yallop had organised a wager on the restoration of James II led the Privy council to instruct the Mayor to conduct a thorough investigation.[24] As a result of such intense government scrutiny Jacobitism went underground and a secret code of ritual and symbolism developed among the adherents of the exiled King. Secret societies, subtle toasts and a belief in the capacity of the divine monarch to touch for the "King's evil" were just a few elements in the Jacobite repertoire.

24. C.S.P.D Oct 21 1697.

With this in mind Dr Clark has suggested a way out of the quantitative quagmire. He has argued that

the point most at issue is not the number of those who can in some simple way be labelled Jacobite but the common currency of discourse...which allowed Jacobite and Tory to shade equivocally into each other, and which allowed them to change sides.[25]

Behind this statement there lies a massive assumption: That in the early eighteenth century the Tory party remained a party of, more or less, unreformed Jacobites.

Many of those living at the time shared that assumption. By characterising the Tories as Jacobites Sir Robert Walpole and the Whigs, who positively wallowed in their commitment to the Glorious Revolution and the Hanoverian succession, succeeded in excluding their opponents from power and patronage for the best part of half a century. Propaganda it may have been, but the point was that it was successful propaganda. Of course there was good circumstantial evidence for the charge. Tory support for James at the time of the exclusion crisis, the shared belief in the divine right of kings, the fact that those who followed James into exile were generally of the Tory persuasion and, in the end, the historical coincidence of the decline of Jacobitism and the dissolution of the Tory party, were just some of the more obvious links in the intellectual, social and political chain which many believed bound the Party to the Cause. Despite the vehement denials of many contemporary Tories the mud stuck.

One of the reasons it did was the all too apparent use of the holiday calendar to express a dynastic preference; the Tory celebrations of the Restoration, the birthday of Queen Anne and the accession of Queen Elizabeth suggested a longing for the old regime, while the concentration of the Whigs on November the fifth and other specifically Hanoverian anniversaries identified them with a resistance to papal tyranny and support for the Glorious Revolution. But it was not just the choice of dates which was suggestive. The dynastic preferences of each party were made explicit by the behaviour of their supporters and opponents on these occasions.

In fact if we are looking for evidence of a "common currency of discourse" between post Revolutionary Toryism and Jacobitism, or, indeed, between the Hanoverians and the Whigs we need look no further than the language of the holiday crowd. With this in mind let us proceed with a case study of the politicisation of popular rejoicing and public ritual in early eighteenth century Norwich.

It should now be obvious that the celebration of the Restoration in 1712 "more loyally than for above twenty years past" was no exercise in innocent and disinterested patriotism. In the context of the growing crisis over Anne's succession the Tories were expressing a clear dynastic preference. The Hanoverian succession did not settle anything in this respect. In 1723 the same anniversary was marked by the ringing of bells, firing of guns and bonfires. Moreover

the streets [were] strown with eggs, oaken boughs [were] set up at the doors, and in some streets garlands and pictures hung out, and a variety of antick and comic dances [were performed]...[with] bumpers to the glorious memory of Charles 11.

Edward Thompson has used this as an example of how the plebs "employed Jacobite symbolism as theatre, knowing well that it was the script most calculated to enrage and alarm their Hanoverian rulers." He went on to argue that "manifestly disloyal as this was, not only to the King but also to the Great Man [Walpole] in his own county, it provided no handle to Law officers of the crown." [26]

As Thompson suggests the popular holiday calendar was a particularly appropriate medium for the expression of such views. In general popular holiday was an occasion of general licence. More particularly the anniversary of the Restoration, along with the anniversaries of the Martyrdom, the monarch's accession and the Gunpowder Plot, enjoyed the legitimation of the established church and the Crown; the divine services ordained by the Book of Common Prayer for these occasions were confirmed by successive Hanoverian monarchs. The crowd used this legitimation, this cloak of loyalty, to place a rhetorical and symbolic dagger at the heart of the body politic.

Furthermore the holiday atmosphere suited the nature of popular Jacobitism well. The faces in the holiday crowd knew that the romantic sentiments they expressed on such occasions would have no consequences

26. Edward Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," in Journal of Social History Vol 7 p 400

outside of the time and space set aside for such festivity. When a test of their real loyalty came, in the attempted rebellions of 1715 and 1745, the bonny brave boys of the Restoration put their home comfort and personal safety above the whimsical hope that the Pretender might be restored. This reflected the real nature of Jacobitism; the instrument of the dispossessed within a general context of "political stability", it could never, in itself, furnish a real challenge to the Hanoverian supremacy.

Nevertheless festive Jacobitism continued to act as a thorn in the side of the Whig establishment. In Norwich the political exploitation of the holiday calendar and other occasions of popular rejoicing reached a peak in the years between 1728 and 1735, a time of considerable political turmoil in the city. The revival of the Tory party was the spark which lit the festive flame. After a decade in the political wilderness the party began to re-establish itself in the city's common council. In the elections of April 1728 they achieved victory in two of the city's four wards. Subsequently they organised a "public rejoicing"; the bells of the Tory controlled parishes rang out with joy and the port guns were fired in jubilation. According to William Chase, the strongly partisan editor of the Whig Mercury, the "Tory mob grown giddy even with a distant view of power" used the celebrations as a cover to insult "gentlemen of the contrary party in the streets and at their own door." [27]

27. N.M April 13 1728.

Sectarian violence also characterised the celebration of the Restoration at the end of the following month. This anniversary had a very special place in Tory (and Jacobite) hearts. In the words of the Gazette it recalled the point at which religion, laws and liberties were restored "after a long, tyrannical and devlish usurpation." Apart from the usual demonstrations of joy

the streets were strown with sand, greens and flowers...[there were] oaken boughs, pictures and garlands. Vast numbers of people wore gilded oak leaves in their hats and breasts, with roses also gilded with gold.

In the parish of St Giles where the Tories were particularly active, a stage was erected for drolls, comic dances and the like.[28]

Once again the Whigs were forced on the defensive. On leaving the market place to go to the King's Head the Artillery Company was attacked by the Tory crowd. With "hallowing and opprobrious language" they proceeded to throw their hats in the soldiers' faces. Provoked beyond endurance the company siezed one of the ringleaders and brought him before the Mayor who had him committed to gaol. Despite such firm action a crowd assembled in the evening and threw stones at the windows of the King's Head where the company had gathered to drink the Monarch's health.

In the next edition the Mercury returned to the attack on the Tory revellers and, in doing so, provided a contemporary, if politically motivated interpretation of

the Tory dress. Noting the presence of " oak boughs and roses gilt" in the Party's livery, Chase commented that "they unluckily prov'd to be white roses, which of late years have been the note of distinction to only be wore by Tories and friends to the pretender." By adding that the white rose had first been used as a political symbol in the abortive rebellion of Perkin Warbeck he made the link between Toryism and treachery doubly clear.[29]

The Whigs now launched their own holiday offensive. They chose the anniversary of the King's accession to do so; its position at the heart of the Hanoverian calendar and the legitimation provided by the Book of Common Prayer made it a particularly suitable medium for their views. In the morning the bells rang and the "loyal and true friends of government strow'd their doors with sand and sweet herbs". During the afternoon the Artillery Company marched to the Lord Bishop's house where they were treated with drink and took part in a round of loyal toasts. Later they proceeded to the bonfire in the market place at which the Mayor, members of the court and "a great many gentlemen" joined them in repeating the loyal healths. Everybody then retired to the King's Head and eight barrels of beer were distributed to the crowd in the market place. The Whigs thus showed that they too could play the populist game. Moreover in its account of the celebrations the Whig Mercury took the opportunity to cast doubt on the integrity of the " over loyal Restoration men" who

had like to have forgot the King's accession, for they neither appeared with a face of chearfulness nor performed antick dances, nor seemed the least pleased by discovering any marks of joy. Now what can be thought of their loyalty ?[30]

At least in the eyes of contemporaries enthusiasm for one particular holiday rather than another had clear political and dynastic implications.

Elections also provided an arena for ritual and symbolic conflict between the parties in Norwich during the 1720's. While at first sight elections do not fall into the popular holiday category, they did provide a nucleus around which a framework of rejoicing and ritual developed. In this sense they were similar to race-meetings, assizes and fairs. Although elections can hardly be termed "festivals of leisure" they can be said to have had a "carnavalesque" quality; the huge influx of crowds to the city, the treating of voters and supporters, and the processions, before, during and after the polling, gave them a carnival air.[31]

Another link with the world of popular holiday was provided by the striking similarity in the language of the crowd. Some of the symbols used at elections in the early eighteenth century were borrowed from a wider festive repertoire, and many of the slogans which the different parties adopted were resonant of those used by the holiday crowd. This interchange of cultural forms should not surprise us. We have already noted the ease with which friendly societies and clubs adopted the

30. N.M June 15 1728.

31. P.Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, p 196.

rituals of their civic forebears and, for a later period, Bob Bushaway has demonstrated the similarity in the rituals of privation and protest.[32]

A good example of the cross fertilization between forms of electoral and holiday rejoicing came in the mayoral election at Norwich in 1728. After their victory the Tories organised extensive celebrations. One particularly resonant feature of the festivities was the use of a pole to carry a garland with "a great many wiggs...[and]...white roses." It was followed by an impromptu bellringer shouting "twelve wiggs for a penny". Both the Tory and the Whig press feigned incomprehension. The Gazette wondered why the Whigs were so upset by the incident while the editor of the Mercury protested that "men of loyalty can never mean to affront government by such mimic diversions." Of course the meaning was clear to both. The proscribed Tories were persistent in accusing the Whig oligarchy of corruption; in Tory eyes the Whigs would sell their votes and liberties as cheaply as a pedlar sold his wares at a fair, or a baker sold his pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.[33]

It was not long before the Whigs were able to respond in the same medium. After the election of Alderman Spurrell in September the Gazette accused the Whigs of organising "a riot" under "pretended demonstrations of joy". Windows were broken and the defeated Tories insulted. The Mercury denied the charge and preferred to focus on the presentation of a twenty

32. Bob Bushaway, By Rite, pp 167-202.

33. N.G June 8 1728: N.M June 8 1728.

eight stone bullock by the "loyal butchers of Bear street".[34]

During the latter part of 1728 the Whigs maintained the festive initiative with an extravagant display of loyalty on Bonfire Night, their favourite date on the holiday calendar. On this occasion the Artillery Company marched through the streets of the city with "pompously dressed" figures of the Pope and Pretender before them. Both effigies were then committed to the bonfire in the market place. Numerous spectators then watched a firework display and it all ended "with a general satisfaction and the least disorder." [35]

The relative passivity of the Tories on this, the highlight of the Whig year is, at first, surprising. But they were in an ambivalent position. For while November 5th had been adopted by the Whigs as the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution, it was primarily a celebration of James I's deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot. In this form the anniversary was as acceptable to the Tories as it was to the Whigs. So long as the latter were not overly enthusiastic in their celebration of the Glorious Revolution the Tories were unlikely to complain.

Five years later, in 1733, the Whigs were in a more provocative mood. Once again the Artillery Company marched to the bonfire in the market place. This time,

34. N.G Sept 14 1728: N.M Sept 14 & 21 1728. The butchers played a similar role to that of the miners at Bedworth in Coventry. By the early nineteenth century there was a formidable group known as "butcher's slaves" who used "to make great havoc amongst the mob of the opposite party at elections and other public gatherings." Charles Hardy, Memories of Norwich and its inhabitants fifty years ago, (1888) p 15.

35. N.M Nov 9 1728.

however, they wore orange cockades in their hats and among the traditional loyal toasts they included healths to the Prince of Orange, and even more provocatively, to Sir Robert Walpole. Not surprisingly the Tories rose to the bait and retaliated by throwing stones, pitt, and oyster shells (a local speciality) at the offending troops. As on the anniversary of the accession in 1728 the company responded by seizing two of the Tory ringleaders and bringing them before the Mayor. Again, however, the crowd returned in the evening where the militia had gathered. They only dispersed when the Sheriff read the Riot Act.[36]

The very different nature of the Bonfire Night celebrations in 1728 and 1733 can only be explained by reference to the change in the political atmosphere of Norwich during the intervening years. Two events, in particular, had contributed to an increasing polarisation of political life in the city and an ensuing rise in the festive temperature. Firstly the Tories had won, and then lost, control over the Corporation. Secondly there had been a growth in the popular opposition to the government of Sir Robert Walpole. The introduction of the Excise Bill during the parliamentary session of 1733 had excited unprecedented popular fury. After the restoration of the Salt Tax this latest attempt to decrease the tax on land by increasing the duty on consumer goods like tea and coffee was bitterly opposed. In particular it was thought unfair that the poorest in society should pay a disproportionate part of the total tax bill. Feeling ran

so high in Norwich that Horace Walpole, who hoped to stand for the city at the forthcoming general election, received instructions from the local Whigs to vote against his brother's proposal. In the country at large the opposition was great enough to force Walpole to climb down and withdraw his bill.[37]

The controversy over the Excise Bill gave the Tories an unprecedented opportunity to harangue the Whigs. Their traditional opposition to taxes of any sort placed them in a good position to exploit the issue to the full. One of the means of doing so, even after the bill had been withdrawn, was to incorporate the event within the holiday calendar.

Thus, in April 1734, the *Mercury* reported the attempt of some "disciples" of the *Craftsman* - the national Tory magazine - to institute rejoicings to celebrate the anniversary of the bill's defeat. A public dinner organised at the Bear Inn was attended by both of the Tory candidates in the forthcoming parliamentary election and the bells of several parishes were rung in commemoration of this notable and popular victory.

The Whig *Mercury* was disparaging, claiming that "upon the whole, the rejoicing...was the meanest that was seen on any publick occasion. No houses were illuminated...[and]...there was no bonfire." In ridiculing the Tory effort the paper threw light on the role of the parish as a political unit and as a base for the exploitation of the holiday calendar. According to

37. Colley, *Op Cit*, pp 72, 157-8, 173-4, 214.

the Mercury there were only seven parishes which allowed their bells to be rung on the occasion and of these

also the greatest part...were such as have distinguished themselves for their disloyalty; for they not only refused to ring for the Princess Royal's marriage, but have for some time refus'd to ring on any day ordered to be observ'd in honour of the Glorious Revolution, his majesty King George or any of his royal house.

Once again we see how the holiday calendar, and preferences within it, could be used as a shibboleth of dynastic allegiance.

The most active parish in these rejoicings was that of St Peter Mancroft. This is hardly surprising as Mancroft ward was the traditional Tory stronghold in the city. The apparatus of this parish was consistently used by the local Tories to exploit popular rejoicing for their own ends. When, in 1729, the Whigs won the election for the freemen's sheriff, the Tory churchwarden refused to allow the ringers access to the bells. On the anniversary of the Excise crisis the flag which adorned the steeple belonged to the same "people who were indicted for a riot at the last Thetford assizes"; that is the ringleaders of the disturbances on Guy Fawkes night in the previous year.[38]

There was no further attempt to celebrate the anniversary of the Excise Bill's defeat. Indeed, at the same point in the following year the Whigs retaliated by reviving the anniversary of William and Mary's coronation. On this occasion they were able to strike a

38. N.M August 30 1729, April 13 1734.

double blow at the Excise revellers. In addition to appropriating their space on the holiday calendar they also captured their festive apparatus. Indeed the parishioners of St Peter's led the way in the novel festivity by illuminating their church and steeple " in honour of the day." Moreover they promised to continue the practice and, true to their word, they did the same in the following year.[39]

The greater confidence of the Whigs in seizing the festive initiative reflected their increased strength in the Corporation. At last the Tory challenge had been seen off. As a result, and in line with the Whigs' true feelings about the practice, the use of rejoicing and ritual for partisan ends declined. Other than a mock funeral for the passage of the Gin Act in 1736 there is no further evidence of such exploitation. Indeed after the Common Council elections of 1737 the editor of the Mercury was able to congratulate the victorious Whigs on the absence of "ringing, singing, firing of guns, shouting, or swearing...[things] which seem to be quite dropt in this city." [40]

It was not until 1745, in the midst of the second Jacobite rebellion, that a new attempt was made to politicise popular holiday. True to form it was the anniversary of the Restoration which provided the initial occasion for this attempt when " a society walked in procession through the market place... preceeded by persons on horseback representing... [Charles II], the Duke of York and General Monck." In this particular

39. N.M April 12 1735, April 17 1736.

40. N.M April 21 1737.

context such a celebration might justly be considered treacherous. Yet the local magistrates were powerless to act. The anniversary continued to enjoy the sanction of a Hanoverian monarch and the legitimation of the established church.[41]

Once again the only effective response open to the supporters of the Hanoverian dynasty was through the medium of popular holiday. In September they organised elaborate celebrations for the King's safe return to Kensington, and in December a general fast was "strictly observed in the city". In January the birthday of the Prince of Wales was used as an excuse to review the reformed Artillery Company and, in April, the birthday of the Duke of Cumberland, commander of the Hanoverian army, was added to the holiday calendar. News of his victory over the rebels arrived later in the month and was greeted by such "demonstrations of joy [as are] usual on such glorious and important occasions." [42]

In contrast to Norwich there was no obvious attempt to politicise the holiday calendar at Coventry during these years. The tight control maintained by the Whig Corporation and the lack of any traditional affection for the Stuarts in this Nonconformist city may explain the relative harmony which surrounded popular rejoicing and public ritual in the years after the Sword and Mace riots in 1711. Furthermore much of the venom between the parties in the city was reserved for the frequently contested parliamentary elections. As at

41. N.G. June 1 1745.

42. N.M. Sept 7, Dec 14 1745, Jan 25 April 19, April 26 of 1746.

Norwich the interchange between electoral and festive forms is clear, as is the popular Jacobitism which underlay the language of the Tory crowd. This was particularly true in the election of 1722.

On the last day of that contest Lord Craven, a local Tory magnate, rode into town at the head of two thousand men on horse and foot. Like a spectacular civic procession they entered the town with "colours flying, drums beating and trumpets sounding." In their hats they wore green twigs and leaves: symbols of their political radicalism to be sure, but also features of the celebrations which traditionally greeted May Day and marked the anniversary of the Restoration.

Such . . . On reaching the centre of the city the Tory cavalcade turned into a rioting mob. Smashing windows and assaulting those without colours they were the mirror image of a crowd enforcing an illumination to mark a victory in a contentious war. More alarming from the government's point of view they then began to shout "Down with the Rump! Down with the King's Head! No Hanoverians! No Seven Year Parliaments! " These were remarkable statements even by the standards of early eighteenth century England. In a tantalising mixture of subtlety and directness they evoked that sense of historical continuity which characterised the thinking of many eighteenth century Tory crowds. In their collective mind the civil war, the "Glorious" Revolution, the accession of the Hanoverians and the Septennial Act were all part of the same Whig conspiracy to rob the Freeborn Englishman of his hard won liberties. Finally the cry of

" Down with the King's Head!" had a terrifying ambivalence. This was primarily a slap at the city Whigs who met at a public house of that name but, in the context of the crowd's other words, it had more treacherous overtones of which the central government was only too well aware.[43]

The account of the words and actions of the crowd on this occasion is by a Whig. We have, therefore, to be suspicious of its validity. Nevertheless there does seem to have been a real sympathy for the exiled Stuarts even among the Tories in Coventry. This may have resulted from their own sense of complete exclusion from power in a city run by a closed corporation of the Whig variety. Such sympathy was clear in the aftermath of the celebrations to mark the defeat of the Jacobite rebellion in 1746. Just twenty four hours after the thanksgiving day in early October a poem appearing on the cross in the market place asked,

Oh you Whigs are these your pranks/ To murder
men and then give thanks?/ Leave off your
pranks and go no further/ For God accepts no
thanks for murder.

On the following day a suitably lyrical response appeared;

You Tory rogues are these your pranks/ To
vilify for giving thanks/ Leave off your pranks
and go no further/ You Tory rogues rebel no
more/ Least you be hanged as those before/For
whilst we give you but your due/ We'll still
give thanks in spite of you.[44]

43. Whitley, *Op Cit*, pp 146-7.

44. *P.U.J.C.M* Dec 2 1776.

Chapter Seven.

Politics, Popular Rejoicing and the Language of the Holiday Crowd (11) c 1747-1835.

In the period between the Restoration and the end of the second Jacobite rebellion popular rejoicing and public ritual provided one of the most important arenas for the various dynastic struggles which continued to characterise English politics. Indeed in the first half of the eighteenth century royal anniversaries and other appropriate popular holidays were practically the only medium for the generally unspoken but, nevertheless, real conflict between the Hanoverians and the Stuarts. It should be clear by now that there was more than a strain of Jacobitism in the language of the Tory crowd on such occasions and more than a hint of paranoia in the response of the Whig establishment.

But even before the '45 there were times when public festivity served a different purpose, or even no purpose at all. Most obviously it sometimes provided a means of reaffirming traditional values towards the community, in general, and the monarchy, in particular. We have already seen how the Restoration, the visit of a monarch, and a royal birthday could serve as occasions to manifest loyalty. The coronation of a new monarch, a popular royal marriage, the declaration of war, a victory

in battle or the conclusion of a beneficial peace also provided opportunities in this respect.

In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the use of rejoicing and ritual as an expression and a catalyst of loyalty to the monarch and, through him, to the nation-state increased dramatically. One reason was the increased self confidence of the Hanoverian dynasty following the final defeat of the Stuarts. As a result of that defeat popular Jacobitism all but disappeared, a fact of no small significance for the conduct of rejoicing and ritual, in general, and the content of the holiday calendar, in particular.

One of the first casualties of the Stuart defeat was the anniversary of the Martyrdom. Never widely observed in Coventry, it fell into disuse at Norwich in the 1770's. By 1771 the Republican Syllas Neville was able to desecrate the feast of this formerly sacred martyr with impunity.[1]

The Restoration also declined in popularity although not to the same extent. In Norwich the anniversary continued to be observed, although in a much depleted form. The entertainments provided by the Mayor and sheriffs for "their friends" and a corporate gift to the prisoners in the city gaol were a pale shadow of the former extravagance. In Coventry, where the event had never enjoyed great attention, the anniversary was only celebrated by politically motivated groups or wayward individuals. By the early nineteenth century the only

1. Basil Cozens-Hardy (ed), The Diaries of Syllas Neville, p 90.

evident enthusiasm for the Restoration came from a "peculiar" royalist called William Crump.[2]

The cause of its decline is clear. After the final defeat of the Stuarts the anniversary of the Restoration lost much of its meaning and most of its potential. Indeed with the dissipation of the Tory party in the 1750's and the absence of faction the holiday calendar, as a whole, lost its political teeth. More generally the relative political tranquillity of the '50's and '60's led to a temporary end to attempts to exploit ritual and rejoicing for party political ends.

For perhaps twenty years the establishment enjoyed a virtual monopoly over this symbolic terrain. If rejoicing and ritual was used at all it was to display and stimulate patriotism. In May 1747, for example, the people of Norwich celebrated the declaration of the Prince of Orange as Stadtholder of the United Provinces; "the bells of the several churches were rung...and at night there was a bonfire [and] illuminations." The dynastic question had been settled and, it seems, even the most ephemeral boost to the fortune of the victors was a cause for "universal joy." [3]

The accession of George III, the first truly English Hanoverian monarch, confirmed and popularised the supremacy of the ruling dynasty. His coronation was a cause for unambiguous celebration throughout the land.

2. Transcript of the memoirs of Mr Odell (1868) in F. Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva, p 192 (see chapter two for a full account of Crump's behaviour). In 1782 a friendly society at Atherstone had to make a specific request to get a sermon preached on the anniversary. (J.C.M. June 3 1782)

3. N.M May 9 1747.

Even in Coventry, where the Whig corporation had good reason to be nervous at the anti-party disposition of this "patriot King", the rejoicing was unrestrained. At two o'clock in the afternoon a cavalcade, headed by several guards in armour and including Bishop Blaise, the companies and the corporation, set out from St Michael's church to parade through the principal streets of the city. On returning to St Mary's Hall the participants were provided with drink to toast the King's health. In the evening "the conduits [ran with] wine", the "streets re-echoed with [shouts of] God save great George our King" and the triumphal arch at the cross displayed effigies "of the King and Queen, trophies and other marks of loyalty suitable to the day." The only mishap occurred when some sparks fell into the armoury box and set off the remaining stock of combustibles; even this was interpreted by many as an elaborate and successful impersonation of a mine being sprung. All in all the evening was "an uninterrupted scene of joy, unanimity and conviviality." At Norwich there were similar demonstrations; a general illumination and "a grand display of fireworks from a triumphal arch erected in the market place." [4]

A year later the people of Coventry were once again able and willing to rejoice for King George. This time the occasion was the birth of an heir to the throne. The contrast with the implied unwillingness to congratulate James II on this account could not have been

4. J. Hewitt, Journal, p 46: Whitley, The Parliamentary Representation of the City of Coventry, appendix pp X-XX: A. Bayne, A Comprehensive History of Norwich, p 279.

greater; the bells rang, the conduits flowed with wine, beer was given to the populace, a large bonfire was erected and, in the evening, the Mayor " and the principal gentlemen of... [the] city assembled at the Mayor's parlour to drink the healths of his majesty, the Queen, the young Prince and all the royal family." [5]

Despite such an auspicious start to his reign the enthusiasm for George III soon declined. His constant interference in Ministerial affairs and his unyielding, and unsuccessful, response to the protests of the American colonists, made him highly unpopular in the nation at large. It was only after the end of the American rebellion that his popularity began to grow once more. His illness, the odious behaviour of his children and the defensive reaction to the virulent anti-royalism of the French revolutionaries brought him sympathy and respect among the English people as a whole. His well documented madness made a particular contribution to this popular renaissance; the attempt of his son George, the would be Regent, to seize the royal prerogative was widely disliked, while the necessary detachment of the sick King from the day to day affairs of state removed the Monarch from the arena of public criticism and made him an object of untainted affection. [6]

This new found popularity was apparent in the festive medium. His recovery from his first spell of madness in 1789 was an object of widespread rejoicing. A national thanksgiving day was appointed in March and, at Coventry, " the morning was ushered in by ringing of

5. J.C.M Aug 16 1762.

6. J.H.Plumb, The First Four Georges, pp 138, 144.

bells at the different churches and, in the evening, every street" was illuminated. Large bonfires were erected in several parts of the city and a firework display took place at night. The Coventry Mercury concluded that "in short, all ranks of people...[gave] every public testimony of health, gratitude and approbation of this providential event." At Norwich the generous benefactions of the Mayor, Lord Orford and other gentlemen ensured that "the festivity was general amongst the poor as well as the rich." [7] the holiday

The King's cause was also helped by his longevity and his growing popularity in this respect was reflected in the progressively greater attention given to the monarch's birthday as an event on the holiday calendar. At Coventry, in 1794, for example, "the anniversary of his majesty's birth was scarcely ever celebrated with more heartfelt pleasure." The bells which rang all day "contributed much to the general joy manifested on that occasion...[fully proving] the attachment of a loyal and happy people to the best of sovereigns". At Norwich in 1810 George's fiftieth birthday as King was observed "with the usual expressions of joy"; the cavalry was drawn up for inspection, the Mayor and corporation attended divine service, the artillery fired a royal salute, and the Mayor entertained about 150 officers and gentlemen at the assembly rooms. A few days later the prisoners in the Bridewell returned their thanks for the dinner of roast

beef, plumb pudding and beer which the Mayor had provided on the happy occasion.[8]

The unanimously loyal celebrations on these occasions would have been welcomed by the Court. Their previous experience of popular rejoicing had often been far less pleasing. During the early years of George's reign public festivity had often been used as a stick to beat the establishment. The chief offender in this respect had been the figure of John Wilkes. No political agitator, before or since, has used the holiday repertoire to such good effect.

The campaign of John Wilkes was based around three issues; the abuse of the general warrant, the refusal of Parliament to allow newspapers to report its proceedings and the ability of the House of Commons to overturn the results of elections in individual constituencies. Wilkes and his supporters opposed all three. However, despite the obvious importance of these three issues it would be a mistake to assess the importance of Wilkes in such dry and conventional terms. For the personality of John Wilkes was as important as the policies he espoused; as the ultimate court jester or "Lord of Misrule" he provided the perfect focus for a previously disparate radicalism. Rejected by the establishment, and determined to be a thorn in its side, he provided the non-parliamentary classes, the "nation

out of doors", with their first sustained political momentum.[9]

In the course of this campaign Wilkes made himself objectionable to the established order to such an extent, indeed, that its representatives in the House of Commons refused to accept his election as the Member for Middlesex. Deprived of the parliamentary stage Wilkes was forced to make use of an "alternative structure of politics." In this respect he was helped enormously by the rise in popular literacy, the growth of the provincial press and the emergence of a network of clubs and societies. As a result of these developments Wilkes was the first radical leader with constant access to a national political market. The newspaper, along with the tavern and the club, provided the institutional framework of an indigenous political culture of which he was to make such effective use; while the paper provided a medium for propaganda and information, the tavern and the club acted as agencies to recruit and mobilise the support so cultivated. [10]

But Wilkes did not rely solely on the press to communicate his ideas. He could not afford to. For while the printed word was a satisfactory medium for mobilising sympathetic merchants, manufacturers and entrepreneurs, its value in relation to largely illiterate wage-earners - journeymen, apprentices, weavers, domestic servants and

9. J. Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III: G. Rudé Wilkes and Liberty; a Social Study 1763-1774. For reference to Wilkes as a Lord of Misrule, see Brewer, *Op Cit*, pp 190-1.

10. Brewer, *Op Cit*, pp 139-60. The first provincial newspaper was printed at Norwich in 1701. Coventry had to wait a further 46 years for a regular local press.

labourers - who provided Wilkes with his most menacing and energetic support was strictly limited. In order to exploit their potential Wilkes had to use a different idiom; the language of ritual and symbol was the most obvious alternative.

Like the Jacobites before them Wilkes and his supporters appreciated the value of collective rejoicing in this respect. The Wilkite crowd proved adept at appropriating days of licence and established festive forms for their own political purposes. On April Fool's Day in 1771, for example, there were mock executions of Lord Bute and the Princess Dowager in London, and we are already familiar with the attempts by the radicals to make use of the mock election at Garrat. At other times this most persistent and resilient of campaigns took on a festive dynamic of its own. The most obvious instance of this was in April 1770 when Wilkes was released from the King's Bench prison where he had been incarcerated for such seditious writings as the attack on the monarch and ministry in edition no. 45 of the North Briton and his Essay on Women. Perhaps the most colourful demonstration of joy was in Norwich where

At noon a company of woolcombers preceeded by a band of music, and 45 of them dressed in Holland shirts, with caps (representing the cap of liberty) made of wool of various colours on their heads, walked in procession thro' the market and the principal streets of this city. They were joined by several societies of weavers, and behaved themselves in a quiet and decent manner.[11]

11. Quoted from the Norwich Mercury in Brewer, Op Cit, p 179.

The form of the celebrations at Norwich is a particularly interesting example of the ability of the Wilkite crowd to both exploit and expand the festive repertoire. The basic framework adopted on this occasion was highly traditional; it was the Blaise procession without the Bishop. But the use of the '45 formation and the representation of the hats which they wore as caps of liberty were new and should be understood, in the context of the Wilkite campaign, as gestures of solidarity and symbols of identity among the supporters of the newly liberated author of the North Briton.

There is no evidence of a similar celebration at Coventry. Despite some local support for Wilkes at the time of his campaign the real impact of the movement on the political life of the city did not become apparent for several years, reinforcing John Brewer's view that the lasting significance of the Wilkites was not their immediate success but that "their radicalism, fertilised by the ideas of the dissident colonists, developed new hybrid strains of thought...[which blossomed] into new and unfamiliar blooms." [12] It was only in 1777 that a committee of freemen was established, originally to contest restrictions upon access to the common lands, but subsequently to force the officers of the Corporation to submit themselves to popular election. As part of the latter campaign numerous handbills were printed, which pointed particularly to the iniquity of a majority of Anglicans being governed by a minority of Dissenters.

12. Brewer, *Op Cit*, p 200.

part . . . The high point of this protest came on the day when the Leet met to elect the officers for the forthcoming year when the members of the freemen's party organised a meeting of the inhabitants in the street outside. With their way blocked the members of the Leet only obtained entry to the hall with the " greatest difficulty" and " not without some hazard and danger to such gentlemen on the panel who were lame and infirm." Once inside, a Mr Morgan, who had been appointed as counsel for the freemen, proceeded to challenge the authority of the Leet to elect the corporation. Instead he proposed that this right lay in the hands of the inhabitants, and accordingly he asked the people inside the hall to raise their hands and vote for a slate arranged by the freemen's committee. After that he led his followers from the hall.[13]

The rigorous procedure followed by the freemen in the morning was echoed in a more colourful medium during the afternoon when " about one hundred of the lower class of people" took part in a mock inaugural procession. They " paraded through the streets with a wooden sword and a bosom." At the end one Lilley read over the names of the " several persons who had been elected in the morning and " another person who acted as cryer...proclaimed them as he read them."[14]

Just like us the Wilkites in Norwich the inhabitants of Coventry had appropriated an established

13. J.C.M Oct 27 1777: Papers relating to the corporation's right to elect the annual officers (C.C.R.O A.142): John Whittingham's diary (C.C.R.O Acc 201) Oct 1777.

14. C.C.R.O A.142.

part of the civic festive repertoire for their own ends. But whereas the woolcombers of Norwich had borrowed the company clothes merely to express their solidarity and to celebrate the good fortune of the cause they supported, the followers in the mock inaugural parade at Coventry were using the rituals of the Corporation to legitimate their actions. As such their close attention to detail is readily understandable.

The Corporation responded by instructing their clerk to send details of all these events to counsel in London to find out if it would be worth bringing the main perpetrators to the court of the King's Bench (the same court which sentenced Wilkes) or if it was possible to have them indicted at the forthcoming assize. In an attempt to impugn the loyalty of the agitators the clerk offered the opinion that

the whole of this business seems to have originated in party and to have been intended by a few particular persons to excite under colour of law a spirit of discontent and opposition amongst the common people to the Corporation.[15]

In the first two decades of the reign of the "Patriot King" the accusation of "party" was akin to that of treachery.

In order to disprove such an allegation the campaigning freemen used the anniversary of the King's accession on the following Saturday to establish their loyalty. In the evening they assembled at different taverns in the city and drank healths to the King, the

15. Ibid.

Royal Family and proposed a toast to the success of His Majesty's forces in America. Despite the changes of the previous fifty years the holiday calendar retained its potential as a medium for political struggle.[16]

In general, then, the late 1770's were characterised by a renewal of political strife both in Coventry and the nation at large. Apart from Wilkes perhaps the most divisive issue of all was the fiscal disobedience of the American colonists. Their refusal to pay "taxation without representation" provoked an uncompromising stand by George III and the ministers who supported him. A long and often unpopular war ensued.

The opposition to the American war came from two main sources. Within Parliament the Rockingham Whigs opposed the war because they believed that "the increase of civic and military establishments" would increase the power of the executive and lead to an expansion of the "secret influence" exercised by Bute and other ministers "behind the curtain." The result would be a decline in the power of Parliament. Outside of Parliament the "nation out of doors" was naturally sympathetic to the main demand of the Americans. Indeed the concept of "no taxation without representation" would play a big part in the movement for parliamentary reform in the early 1780's.[17]

16. J.C.M 27 Oct 1777.

17. F.O'Gorman, The Emergence of a British Two Party System, pp 2, 11-12: Brewer, Op Cit, p 17.

There was extensive popular antipathy to Britain's ultimately abortive exercise in imperial discipline. This was particularly true in Coventry where the large number of Nonconformists had extra reason to sympathise with the plight of their trans-Atlantic contemporaries, for they too felt in some way excluded by the British establishment, subject as they were to the increasingly despised Test and Corporation acts. Although a Catholic, the analysis of John Whittingham, may have been typical of that offered by many Dissenters in Coventry and other manufacturing towns. While approving of the petitions of the "Low party" for "lenient measures" he observed that the more numerous and powerful "High Party"

approved of the sanguine measures of the ministry to kill or enslave the Americans...[and that] the ministry meeting with support and a great majority in both houses, they pursued their blundering scheme at an amazing expense tho (as I think) without any likelihood of success.[18]

Despite such vigorous opposition it is true that the majority of the British people within and outside the House of Commons supported the attempt to suppress the colonial rebels. Not least because their case challenged the legitimacy of Parliament. Victories against the Americans or their allies generated prolonged and largely sincere rejoicing. At Coventry in 1776, for example, the fortunate coincidence of Bonfire Night and the news of the taking of New York, was celebrated by illuminations on that and the succeeding evening, while at Norwich in 18. Whittingham's diary Nov 10 1776.

late May 1782 the "capture of two ships of the line and a frigate by one of [Admiral] Rodney's commanders" was greeted by an illumination and "every demonstration of joy...[usual upon] so glorious an event." [19]

Sometimes, however, the conduct of the War failed to receive such unanimous approval; an indication of the strong opposition that existed to the venture. One such occasion was the general fast at Coventry in December 1776, when although some "shut up shops and did not work" others "who hated the ministry" did not. Nearly three weeks beforehand a poem criticising the event, "The Downfall of Britons", had appeared in various parts of the city. Like the poetry which criticised the celebrations for the victory at Culloden forty years before it received an immediate response. But this time those who opposed the sentiments expressed in the poem chose to burn it rather than better it. [20]

In Norwich, where the Corporation was split in two over the conduct of the American war, divisions also became apparent in the context of popular rejoicing. The news of the capture of the Isle of St Eustacius in March 1781 was received with the ringing of bells and the firing of guns, and on the following day the dragoons were drawn up in the market place to fire three celebratory volleys. However this apparently unanimous

19. Ibid Nov 5 1776: N.M June 1 1782.

20. Whittingham's diary Nov 26, Dec 13 1776: J.C.M Dec 2 1776. Ralph Orton, who was to stand as a steward on the freemen's slate in the following year, was among the main perpetrators of this action. In using this particular ritual form he and the other loyalists were, perhaps unconsciously, imitating the actions of the House of Commons in 1763 when they ordered that the North Briton no 45 should be burnt at the Exchequer by the common hangman. (Rude, Op Cit, p 33).

joy was soon dissipated by the popular demands for an illumination in the evening. For while the inhabitants of the market place and several other parts of the city obliged, there were many who refused to participate and as a consequence had their windows broken.[21]

Perhaps the high point of the dispute over the conduct of the American war was the general election of September 1780. One of the most interesting things to emerge from that election was the practice of different political groups of celebrating the anniversary of whatever success they enjoyed and, thus, adding a new impetus to the traditional relationship between electoral politics and popular rejoicing.

In Norwich the election of 1780 saw the emergence of the Independent interest. Known locally as the Blue and Whites they formed the first coherent opposition to the aldermanic Junto which had governed the city in the previous thirty years. Of their two candidates in the September election one, Harbord Harbord, was elected and the other, William Windham, laid the foundation for future success. The Blue and Whites immediately incorporated the date of the election into their particular holiday calendar and adopted "The Eleventh of September" as their anthem. At their anniversary dinner in 1782 they sang this and other "patriotic" songs.[22]

In Coventry the election was characterised by extraordinary violence and corruption as well as the consolidation of Independent/Tory support in the city.

21. N.M March 17 1781.

22. O'Sullivan, Thesis, pp 107, 123: N.M Sept 14 1782.

Because of the refusal of the sheriffs to allow the Independent voters access to the polling booths in September a second election was ordered for November. Once again electoral malpractice, in a variety of forms, stalked the streets of the city. The furious struggle for control of the polling booths on the first day entered the annals of the city as the "Battle of the Bludgeons". On this occasion the Independents or the True Blues won what they regarded as a moral and a memorable victory, so memorable in fact that, like the Independents of Norwich, they made it a central part of their festive portfolio in the following year.[23]

Both the True Blues of Coventry and the Blue and Whites of Norwich (who, in party terms, were closer to the Whig than the Tory tradition) were using festivity as a means of maintaining their political momentum between elections. Once again, therefore, we have to return to the idea of politically induced rejoicing and ritual as "crucial elements in the mobilisation of bias." [24]

In arriving at this theory Steven Lukes suggested, but failed to make explicit, the difference between the "bias" sought by competing ideological groups and that cultivated by the state. In going beyond the "somewhat simplistic idea of political ritual expressing-producing-constituting value integration and taking up" instead the fertile idea that ritual has a

23. C.C.R.O Acc 122: J.C.M Nov 26 1781.

24. S.Lukes, Essays in Social Theory, p 73.

cognitive dimension" Lukes suggested a number of new options in the analysis of political ceremonial. Most relevantly he argued that it should be possible both " to explore the symbolic strategies used by different groups...to defend or to attain power" and " to reveal the manifold ways in which institutionalised activities, seen as ritual, can serve to reinforce and perpetuate official models of social structure and social change". Within his own contemporary terms of reference the orange ~~Parades~~ in Northern Ireland are an example of the former, while the Coronation of Elizabeth II was a model of the latter.[25]

Within the temporal context of this study it is clearly possible to strengthen and extend such an idea. We are already familiar with the " symbolic strategies" employed by competing political groups at Norwich during the 1720's and for " institutionalised activities seen as ritual" we have only to look to the proclamation of a new monarch or a Royal visit to see how they could be used in the way identified by Lukes. Furthermore it is apparent from the evidence presented in this study that while both types of exploitation could co-exist, it is generally the case that, depending upon the political climate, one form prevailed. In the early eighteenth century, for example, the prevailing tendency was for popular rejoicing and public ritual to be used for sectarian ends. This was also true of the 1770's.

However in the later years of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century the

pendulum swung in the opposite direction. From the late 1780's the employment of the festive medium for narrowly partisan ends largely ceased, and, instead, rejoicing and ritual, if it was exploited at all, was used by the establishment to consolidate and legitimate the status quo. As such it provided a means of inducing loyalty to that particular set of institutions, values and beliefs which made up what might, loosely but accurately, be described as the "ancien regime". The use of rejoicing and ritual in this manner reflected the basic confidence and legitimacy of a nation-state at a critical point in the development of its internal organisation and international power, and at a time when the values, beliefs and the structure of the society over which it held sway, were undergoing fundamental change. Let us examine the festive consequences of this situation in more detail.

The twin forces of War and Reform provided a basic challenge to the security of the British establishment in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but its authority was rarely questioned. The defeat of the Stuarts in 1745 and the accession of George III gave the Hanoverian monarchy a novel sense of its own legitimacy. This was reflected and confirmed by an increasingly comprehensive popular acceptance of the post-Revolutionary settlement. Indeed it became a source of pride for the Freeborn Englishman; he could compare the liberty and prosperity he enjoyed as

a result of this judicious balance between the executive and the legislature with the poverty and the oppression of his continental counterparts. He often did so. They symbolic wearing of wooden shoes in London and elsewhere during the campaigns against the Excise Bill, the Gin Act and the repression of John Wilkes, was meant as a warning of the dangers which could arise from the corruption of the English constitution.[26]

The high point of the glorification of the nation-state as "this present happy establishment" was the centenary of the Glorious Revolution in 1788. Richard Jecliffé recalled that on November 4th there

was a general illumination over the country [and] there was a very grand one at Coventry...[where] there were public dinners at all the principal inns and taverns...roasting of sheep and bells ringing all the day.

Personally he recalled dining at the Half Moon tavern where he had the unlikely fortune to eat with a man who said he was seven at the time of the Revolution and was able to remember the great events of that year.[27]

Apart from the last detail Jecliffé's recollections are confirmed in full by the newspapers of the time. On the actual anniversary of the Revolution there was a feast at St Mary's hall which was "numerously attended by the neighbouring nobility, gentry and principal inhabitants of the city." On the following day,

26. It was widely believed that wooden shoes - as worn by European peasants writhing under the taxation and tyranny of absolute monarchy - represented poverty and oppression. Hugh Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism", in History Workshop Vol 12, Autumn 1981, p 11.

27. C.C.R.O Acc 122.

the fifth of November, a rather more popular celebration was organised at the Bull Inn and other public houses.[28]

At Norwich the festivities were just as extensive. The canons on the Castle Hill were fired, the bells rang out and the Mayor and Corporation attended the Cathedral for divine service. In the evening there was a general illumination and a bonfire in the market place. Among the many public dinners there was one for 102 gentlemen at the Maid's Head and one given by the Gregorians for "three hundred of their friends" in their chapter rooms at the Swan and the King's Head.[29]

The centenary of the Glorious Revolution, like the Restoration in 1660, was an occasion for communal rejoicing. The nation as a whole was giving thanks for the divine good fortune it had received. In Norwich the Gregorians set the tone in this regard; in organising a large bonfire in the market place and presenting a dinner to the prisoners in the city gaol they were demonstrating their determination "that every class of inhabitants may in some measure participate in the general good humour of the day." Nationally the illumination fulfilled a similar purpose; symbolising the universality of the joy which surrounded this most propitious of the anniversaries on the holiday calendar of the late eighteenth century.[30]

Nevertheless traces of former political rivalries endured. The form of the celebration was distinctively Whig and reflected their long held

28. J.C.M Nov 3 & 17 1788

29. Jewson's notes on clubs and societies (N.N.R.O MC 64/5): Bayne, Op Cit, p 283.

30. N.M Nov 1 1788.

suspensions of the holiday crowd. Public, and decidedly genteel, dinners dominated the proceeding and while there was a general illumination it was at the bidding and under the control of the authorities. It is significant that, in the event, the Mayor of Norwich was forced to put a dampener on the desire of the Gregorians to involve the populace. At the behest of the inhabitants of the market place, he refused permission for the large bonfire they had planned and the Mercury described what appeared in its place as "a parsonimous blaze". In Coventry there was no bonfire and the firework display on the King's birthday earlier in the year was not repeated. Furthermore the popular rejoicing which did take place was firmly relegated to the day following the actual anniversary of the Revolution; hinting perhaps at the old tensions surrounding these two most partisan of dates on the holiday calendar. In fact the enduringly Whig Norwich Mercury made that tension explicit when it opined that William III had actually landed on the fifth of November "but in order to avoid popular prejudices on account of the Gunpowder Plot...the preceeding date was fixed".[31]

Neither was the contemporary political utility of this anniversary lost on those with an eye to such things. With scant regard for chronological exactitude the Coventry Mercury argued that if

the year 1588 is memorable for the providential deliverance of the nation by the timely discovery of the Gunpowder Plot; the year 1688 for the restoration of civic and religious liberties to this Kingdom...may not the year 1788 stand recorded with honour in the annals

of British history...[for the abolition] of the slave trade.[32]

Similarly, among the toasts given at the dinner held by the Gregorians in Norwich there was one which expressed the hope that " the next session, of Parliament [will] be distinguished by the repeal of the Shop Tax."[33]

Another dinner held in Norwich, that of the 102 gentlemen at the Maid's Head, laid the basis for the greatest innovation in the political life of the city since the emergence of the Independents during the late 1770's. The diners of 1788 met again in the following year where, in response to the events in France, they combined to form the aptly named Revolution Society. In doing so they set the seeds for the growth of one of the largest and most significant radical movements in the country; by 1794 there were four thousand members of the thirty to forty artisan clubs which made up the Revolution Society in the city. That made it one of the four largest organisations of its kind in the country.[34]

The birth of the Revolution Society in Norwich, and of similar organisations elsewhere, was a measure of the widespread and positive interest in the ideas and the actions of the French revolutionaries. However the generally friendly reception given to those ideas and actions came to an end in 1791 when the anti-Royalism of the Jacobins provoked an English reaction in favour of the monarchy, in particular, and the establishment, in

32. J.C.M Nov 17 1788.

33. N.M Nov 8 1788.

34. N.N.R.O MC 64/5: O'Sullivan, Thesis, pp 138-9.

general. The Priestley riots at Birmingham on the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille on July 4th inaugurated a revival of "Church and King" sentiments in the nation at large, while the War with France led to unprecedented government surveillance and repression of radical groups. In Coventry crowds waited in supportive but non-violent mood on the night of the Priestley riots, while at Norwich the growth of the Revolution Society was brought to an abrupt halt in May 1794 when Isaac Saint, the secretary of the local Corresponding Society was arrested.

The growth of conformist attitudes towards Royalty and Religion was reflected in the language of the holiday crowd. The first indication of the change of mood in this respect came in the winter of 1792-3. At Coventry, on January 1st 1793, a cart, with an effigy of Thomas Paine, the author of the Rights of Man was drawn to Cross Cheaping " where together with his work, and a portrait of Mr Fox...[with] a halter round his neck, it was burnt; a band playing the *Rogue's March* and the people singing *God Save the King*." [35]

This was the first of many such " executions" in the area. A week later the Mercury was able to report that just outside Coventry at the hamlet of Princethorp and through the parish of Stretton-upon-Dunsmore

the effigy of Tom Paine with the Rights of Man in one hand and an old pair of stays in the other was carried upon an ass... with a band of music playing *God Save the King*...[and] after hanging the usual time he was committed to the

flames amidst the shouts of numerous spectators.[36]

In the following week the paper described a similar event at Berkswell and, on February 18th, it noted mock executions at Stratford-upon-Avon and at Birmingham where on Shrove Tuesday

a well dressed representation of the author of the Rights of Man with the work in one hand, a pair of stays under his arm and a label at his back expressing "The Arch Traitor Tom Paine, Erskine's Client" was exhibited through the principal streets...[after which] he was hanged on a gallows twenty feet high...[and] expressing their loyalty by singing *God Save the King* etc the concourse of people which was very great quietly dispersed. The hangman who attended this arch rebel, carried the painting of Fox with a halter around his neck, and the music played the *Rogue's March*.

There were similar demonstrations in Norfolk, although not in Norwich, where the radical movement remained strong. Even after the disappearance of the Revolution Society the radical movement re-emerged as the Patriotic Society. Their popularity was fuelled by the shortage of food and resentment at recruitment. There was a mock execution in the city, but it took place three years later and the subjects were not Paine and Fox, but rather Prime Minister Pitt and William Windham (City M.P and Secretary-at-War).[37]

The mock executions of Paine and Fox shed some light on the nature of plebeian culture in the late eighteenth century; on its diversity and variety as well

36. J.C.M Jan 14 1793.

37. N.M Jan 12 1793: O'Sullivan, Thesis, p 150. Those who burned the effigies of Pitt and Windham were protesting at the implementation of the Supplementary Militia Act.

as its essential unity. The ceremonies themselves can be seen as cultural composites; there were elements from public hangings, court martials and Skimmingtons in the actions of the crowd on these occasions. The precise form and time of the execution, the playing of music which accompanied the drumming out of a disgraced soldier from the army and the ritualised movement of an effigy around the streets on a cart or an ass were and are instantly recognised as forms derived from these very different cultural arenas. But the crowd also made use of their more obviously festive experience. Many of these events, like that at Coventry on New Year's Day and that at Birmingham on Shrove Tuesday, took place on established days of rejoicing and licence, while the form of the executions themselves owed a great deal to practices associated chiefly with the celebrations on November 5th.

The ability of the holiday crowd to absorb and adopt a variety of cultural forms was not new. In this study we have noted several examples of such cultural cross-fertilisation; the antics of the political revellers at Norwich in the 1720's, the "declaration" of the freemen's slate at Coventry in 1777 and the appropriation of civic forms by the voluntary clubs and societies of the later eighteenth century to name but a few. In national terms this process reached a peak during the Wilkite campaign.

In commenting on the activities of the crowd at that time John Brewer noted that "the rites of authority and popular tradition did not have to be learnt; they were an indigenous part of the nation's political

culture." [38] This brings us to the second major point about the "executions" of Paine and Fox. Apart from the diversity of their cultural origins what is striking about the actions of the crowd on these occasions is the similarity of form between them. This reflected and reinforced the essential unity of popular culture, in general, and popular political culture, in particular, during the late eighteenth century.

The development of a national political culture, of a shared set of "attitudes, beliefs, emotions and values...[in relation] to the political system and to political issues", was helped enormously by the onset of war. [39] In general terms the threat to collective security which war involved provided the most important means of defining the nation as a whole, while the occasions for popular rejoicing which it afforded acted as a medium to mobilise the support of a potentially disgruntled people. The announcement of hostilities, petitions for divine favour, news of a victory in battle and the declaration of peace all provoked popular, and more importantly, loyal celebration. The Napoleonic war provided particularly good opportunities in this respect. The twenty two long years in which Britain was engaged in conflict with France allowed the establishment to build on the revival of "Church and King" sentiments among the population and

38. Brewer, *Op Cit*, p 189.

39. A.R. Ball, Modern Politics and Government, p 52.

to virtually monopolise public festivity as a means of mobilising bias in its favour. Its success in this respect was in sharp contrast to the continuing use of the festive medium in the American war for manifestations of opposition. The change was accounted for by the novel ability on the part of the government to claim "the language of patriotism as its own." Until the Napoleonic war the role of the patriot had been largely monopolised by radical critics of the government. It was used as a means to legitimate opposition in an age where such a concept was considered unconstitutional and even treacherous. Radical claims to patriotism had a distinguished and a successful pedigree in the eighteenth century; Bolingbroke had developed the notion of the "Patriot King" which was later adopted by George III as an antidote to the concept of party, while Wilkes had so monopolised (and in establishment eyes tainted) patriotism that the government effectively abandoned its claims in this respect. It was only with the beginning of the conflict with France that the forces of the establishment re-entered the patriotic fray and while radical patriotism was not entirely extinguished in these years the circumstances of war provided the government with the means to re-capture the patriotic prize.[40]

One consequence of the government's increasing self confidence in this area was the development of a patriotic repertoire. While the symbolic forms used to celebrate British triumphs against France were far from

40. Hugh Cunningham, *Op Cit*, pp 8-15.

new, they were a good deal more sophisticated and elaborate. At Coventry in 1794, for example, the news of the capture of Bastia by Lord Hood was greeted by the ringing of bells. In the evening there was an illumination; among the "brilliant transparencies and devices displayed" there were figures of "His Majesty's Crown...the arms of Lord Howe and Lord Hood" and at their foot "the flag of France appeared torn in pieces and that of Great Britain flying triumphantly over it". Eighteen sheep were roasted in the various wards and during the time of the celebrations "many loyal and apposite toasts were drank, and the good old songs of *God Save the King*, *Rule Brittania* and *Britons Strike Home* were quite the favourite in every part of the city." [41]

Of course these "good old songs" had only been penned in the eighteenth century. But that they were regarded as such is what is important; the Crown, the flag and these patriotic anthems were now established parts of the repertoire of the Freeborn Englishman. The establishment could use them to demand loyalty and obedience. They were the stuff of a novel patriotic consensus.

That consensus developed as the war continued. Even in Norwich where, as we can see from the title of the radical movement which succeeded the Revolution Society in 1795, the government monopoly of patriotism was hotly disputed, the patriotic pendulum was swinging in the establishment's favour. The arrival of captured troops from Yarmouth, the appearance of patriotic poems

in the press and the mobilisation of the middling sort through parish petitions and the Volunteer movement, combined to nourish "war fever" in the city.[42]

The cause of the establishment in Norwich was helped by the prominence of Admiral Nelson in the war. He was born in Norfolk and had attended Norwich Grammar School in the grounds of the Cathedral. The local press had been following his career since his success as a Captain in the Mediterranean during 1795.[43] His local association gave many in the city a personal interest in the execution of the war and provided an extra dimension to the celebrations which greeted his triumphs. In November, 1798, for example, the central aspect of the celebrations for his victory at Alexandria was a procession by the Mayor, the Corporation, the parochial associations and the Light Horse Volunteers to the Cathedral for divine service. At the front was a prize sword which Nelson had presented to the city in January of that year.[44] Sometimes however such a personal association could serve to dampen the festivities; the local pride and joy which accompanied the victory at Trafalgar in 1805 was seriously constrained by the news of Lord Nelson's death.

However in general news of British victories in the Napoleonic wars was greeted by rejoicings of an unprecedented scale. When the news of the successful conclusion to the Battle of the Nile reached Coventry there were bonfires, fireworks and "sheep roasted in all

42. O'Sullivan, Thesis, p 151.

43. N.M Oct 10 1795.

44. Bayne, Op Cit, p 289.

the principal streets." The rejoicing continued for three days and on the final evening there was a general illumination throughout the city. At Norwich there were similar popular celebrations and an Ox was roasted in the market place.

It was, however, the possibility of the declaration of an end to hostilities which generated the greatest popular rejoicing of the war, a fact which seems to confirm Hugh Cunningham's belief that "if the public had an opinion it was for peace." [45] The declaration of the Peace of Amiens in October 1801 was particularly welcome. Parson Woodforde noted that there were "great rejoycings" at Norwich when the news of that event arrived from London on October 3rd. At the request of the Corporation the major festivities were put off until October 21st on account of those "many persons...[who have] expressed a wish to be allowed time to make suitable arrangements". In fact rain on the appointed day delayed the proceedings even further and the roasting of the bullock and the general illumination had to be put off until the 22nd.

A good deal more caution was apparent in Coventry about the chances of a lasting peace. Although a committee was set up in October to organise the celebrations, the festivities themselves were deferred until the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens in April of the following year. Even when confirmation of the peace finally arrived the immediate response was limited to the ringing of bells throughout the city; the procession and

45. Cunningham, *Op Cit*, p 13.

the illumination organised by the committee were put off until Easter Monday.

The reservations of the Coventry magistrates in respect of the Peace of Amiens proved correct, and both sides resumed hostilities in May 1803. It was to be another ten years before peace seemed possible again when, in 1813, Napoleon abdicated for the first time. In Norwich the event was greeted by the ringing of bells, a procession with a band, the roasting of a bullock in the market place, and the presentation of bread and beer to the populace. The total cost of the rejoicings amounted to £216.0.6d - a substantial sum.

But Napoleon returned. In fact the citizens of France and Britain had to wait a further two years before peace finally arrived with Wellington's triumph at Waterloo and the subsequent banishment of Bonaparte to St Helena. The relief of the people of Coventry and Norwich was joyfully evident. At Coventry there were three days of rejoicing. At six o'clock on the first day the bells of the city rang out and, at nine, the 1st and 4th Warwickshire regiment was drawn up in Cross Cheaping to fire three celebratory volleys. The procession which left the County Hall two hours later was one of the largest in the city's history; the Corporation was accompanied by the Masonic Lodge, the thirteen trading companies, numerous benefit societies, representatives of the Army and Navy, and figures of Brittania and Neptune. The investment of festive resources was so great that the Godiva Procession of that year had to be cancelled. [46]

In Norwich there were celebrations of a similar scale. The news of the victory at Waterloo was met by the ringing of bells and the firing of the Castle cannon, while the expedition coach which brought the news of Napoleon's political demise was "decorated with laurel and flags" and "dragged through the streets to singing of *God Save the King* and *Rule Britannia*."

During the Napoleonic wars the establishment exploited, developed and supported popular rejoicing and public ritual for their own ends. Public festivity had been of central importance in maintaining the patriotic momentum; by its very nature erratic - coming in "bursts" or "waves" according to Clive Emsley - loyal, as opposed to radical, patriotism was encouraged and excited by the collective rush and the resonant symbolism of the popular celebrations which followed victories in battle and the approach or conclusion of a favourable peace. Over twenty two long, hard, war-torn years rejoicing and ritual provided the government with one of its few means of retaining popular support. This was particularly important in the light of the opposition's frequent efforts to exploit the weariness of the people to force successive Ministries to sue for an early peace.[47]

In general, then, popular rejoicing and public ritual had a "good war". As we will see in the next chapter the subsequent support of the establishment was of increasing importance for the festive cause;

47. Clive Emsley, British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815.: O'Gorman, Op Cit, p 11.

traditional views that collective activity of this kind merely encouraged disorder and immorality were gaining new ground among some sections of the population, while the process of industrialisation and the re-ordering of society around the concept of class posed new threats to the security of the festive medium.

One of the biggest challenges to the proliferation of rejoicing and ritual would come from the party of opposition, the present Whigs and the future Liberals. They and their political antecedents had always distrusted the holiday crowd; their initial reluctance to use the festive medium in the "rage of party", for example, had been justified, in their eyes, by the subsequent behaviour of the Tory revellers in that period. That was a lesson the Whigs of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries refused to forget and when, with the reform of the corporations, an opportunity to discard much of the popular and civic festive repertoire arose they seized it eagerly. But for the moment they had to live with this particular medium. In the context of the ancien regime - where so many of their natural supporters were unrepresented and, therefore, incapable of making an electoral impact on the Tory monopoly of power after 1784 - popular rejoicing and public ritual provided one of the few means of attacking the government effectively. Thus, in the Queen Caroline affair, Lord Brougham was able to force his naturally unwilling colleagues, to use that medium to maximise the government's embarrassment. Brougham, who had been

employed as counsel for the Queen, quickly recognised the political potential of the King's insistence and the government's willingness to sue for divorce. The deep unpopularity of George IV (formerly a pushy uncaring Prince of Wales and an arrogant Regent) provoked widespread sympathy for the far from innocent Queen among a population which had been traditionally happy to play on the obvious discomfort of their rulers. By the early nineteenth century - with the experience of popular Jacobitism and the Wilkite campaign behind them - they had a well developed repertoire of ritual and symbolism with which to do so.

The continuing willingness of the Whigs to use popular rejoicing and public ritual was also apparent in the campaign for Parliamentary reform during 1832. In fact the passage of the Reform Act in June of that year was the occasion for the greatest public celebrations since the end of the Napoleonic wars. In Norwich the anticipation of the measure's success led to a proposal for a committee to organise a "festival of reform". Funded by subscription, the celebration was extensive. On July 7th a cavalcade of over a half a mile in length, proceeded through the principal streets of the city. At the head of the procession there was a trumpeter and a red and gold flag inscribed "The Triumph of the People." Behind there were numerous horsemen, a printing press and

a Bombasine loom - which presumably signified the educational and economic benefits which were expected to flow from Reform - and, finally, representatives from the various wards in the city who carried flags and wore oak leaves and cockades in their hats.

Among the banners there was one which read "Taxation without Representation is Tyranny", another which enthused "Britons no longer be slaves and a third which proclaimed "The King, the People, and Reform". There were others, however, of a more divisive nature which, despite the best efforts of the Reformers, hinted at the tensions which had arisen in the course of the campaign between themselves and the defenders of the ancien regime; "one especially (the caricature of the clerical magistrates) was ordered out of the hall, for the managers were determined to allow no just cause for offence." To ensure this further the committee instructed the procession to walk in silence. The festival finished with speeches at a dinner on the Cricket Ground.[48]

In Coventry there were festivities of a similar but of a much less controversial nature; a reflection, perhaps of the relative lack of political conflict in that city over the issue. Nevertheless on June 25th, there was "a procession to celebrate the grand triumph of Reform". Travelling much the same route as that followed by the Godiva Procession it was headed by the Juvenile Society and a banner which read "may the hopes of the rising generation be realised." Behind them there was a band of music, "a champion of Reform, on a charger,

48. N.M May 12 and July 5 1832.

bearing in his hand the Reform Act", a banner with a crown on top which celebrated "Our Patriot King and Reform" and the ten divisions of the Coventry Political Union. Benefit societies and five of the trading companies also participated in the cavalcade, as did some of the inhabitants and the electors from the different wards in the city. Between them there were several more bands, a number of Marshalmen and, most symbolic of all "the figure of Brittania, with spear and shield, tramping corruption under her feet." [49]

There were some obvious differences between these rejoicings and the politically inspired festivities of the eighteenth century; the silence of the followers and the literary nature of the banners would have been highly unlikely earlier in the period. But it is the traditionalism not the novelty of these proceedings which is really striking. Despite the intrinsic modernity of their cause the Reformers were relying on well established forms even to the point where, at Norwich, some of the revellers wore oak leaves and cockades in their hats; symbols of radicalism, loyalty and affiliation which would have been equally resonant in the very different political context of the 1720's.

It is significant that no such celebrations marked the passage of the second Reform Act in 1835. Indeed it was the opponents of Reform who seized the festive mantle on this occasion; using the Blaise procession and the Guild Day in Norwich and the Godiva procession in Coventry to draw people's attention to the

benefits of the ancien regime. By this stage the supporters of Reform in Norwich and Coventry felt confident enough to follow their real instincts and discard popular rejoicing and public ritual as remnants of the old, violent and corrupt society they were leaving behind.

I will return to the festive consequences of Municipal Reform in the following and final three chapters. For now I would like to conclude by reaffirming the notion that, in the years between the Restoration and the dissolution of the corporations popular rejoicing and public ritual played a central part in the political life of Norwich and Coventry. Both the state and those political groups which sought to control it at the national or the local level used the festive medium as a means to mobilise popular support or "bias" in their favour. This was true of all the very different political movements of the period; the restored Stuarts, the supporters of the Glorious Revolution, Tory Jacobites, Walpolian Whigs, Hanoverian populists, Wilkites, Revolutionaries, Reformers and patriots all attempted to exploit popular holiday for their own ends.

During that time the language of the holiday crowd changed dramatically. In the eighteenth century alone the predominantly Jacobite idiom apparent in the 1720's and 1730's had, by the late 1780's, given way to the overpowering sentiments for the "Church and King". However despite this fundamental change in the mood of

the holiday crowd, the form of the ritual and symbolism they variously deployed remained largely the same. There were some changes of necessity. Edward Thompson is right to differentiate between the language of the early and the later eighteenth century. It is certainly true that

as we move backwards from 1760 we enter a world of theatrical symbolism which is more difficult to interpret...a language of ribbons, of bonfires, of oaths and the refusal of oaths, of toasts, of seditious riddles and ancient prophecies, of oak leaves, and of May Poles, of ballads with a double-entendre, even of airs whistled in the street.[50]

But it would be wrong to suggest that after 1760 the crowd dispensed with such forms. The ribbons, the bonfires and the ballads not only remained but proliferated, while other elements of the Jacobite idiom could be revived at will; the wearing of oak leaves by the Reforming revellers at Norwich is an excellent example. Furthermore it is also the case that the illuminations and the burning of effigies which Thompson calls "comparatively modern" were, in fact, highly traditional forms.

One must conclude that the political holiday crowd had an extensive and a flexible repertoire. In the circumstances of the early eighteenth century the language they used was necessarily more difficult to interpret; for the Jacobite revellers it was a code to proclaim a forbidden allegiance. With the final defeat of the Stuarts the need and the desire to use such obscure rituals and symbols declined. But the forms themselves

50. E.P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture", in Journal of Social History, vol 7, p 400.

did not disappear. It was just that other elements of the holiday repertoire proved more appropriate.

Clearly the language of the holiday crowd needs more attention and possibly deeper interpretation. What I hope I have been able to do in this necessarily extensive investigation of the relationship between politics and popular rejoicing in Norwich and Coventry is to re-assert the centrality of such activity in the "political discourse" of early modern England. Popular festivity retained a political potential until the very end of the period. Indeed the final, deliberate, and eager disavowal of this medium by the Reformers of 1835 was a tribute to its utility in this respect.

Chapter Eight.

The divergence of polite and plebeian cultures in Norwich and Coventry 1660-1835.

The disavowal of popular rejoicing and public ritual as a means of political expression by the Reformers in 1835 was more than a long overdue manifestation of the traditional distaste felt by them and their Whig predecessors towards such activity. It also represented a new peak in the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures; a process which had begun over a century before the beginning of the period with which this thesis is concerned and which resulted in the withdrawal of many members of the middling and upper groups in society from the cultural activity of the people at large.[1] One of the major casualties of this divergence was the communal holiday calendar; reformed,

1. The notion of a divergence of polite and plebeian opinion in early modern England has an impressive historiographical pedigree. Perhaps the most relevant studies are R.W. Malcolmson, Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850, Bob Bushaway, By Rite: Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880, C.Hill, Society and Puritanism in pre-Revolutionary England, K. Wrightson, English Society 1580-1680, K. Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, and Fletcher and Stevenson (ed), Order and Disorder in Early Modern England. All of these point in a variety of ways to a progressively greater cultural antagonism between the upper, middle and lower orders in the period following the Reformation. I have derived the actual terminology from two articles by Edward Thompson; "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture", in Journal of Social History vol 7, and "Anthropology and the discipline of historical context", in Midland History vol 1:3.

suppressed or merely deprived of essential support, this had become a shadow of its former self by the middle of the nineteenth century.[2]

The nature, pace and extent of the divergence between polite and plebeian opinion varied over time and place, as did its impact upon the recreation and leisure of the people at large. In Europe, as a whole, the attempts at reforming popular culture were made during two distinct periods. The first, covering the years 1500-1650, was dominated by the Reformation and characterised by arguments of a predominantly religious nature. During these years attempts to reform popular culture were limited to Protestant Europe and carried out by clerics. In the second period, from 1650-1800, the geographical extent, the nature and the source of the arguments over plebeian behaviour changed; now they were conducted throughout the continent, inspired by the scientific and industrial revolutions, and articulated mainly by lay reformers.[3]

In England a desire to reform, suppress or simply withdraw from the culture of the people was apparent as early as the middle of the sixteenth century. At that stage the major impetus for change came from Puritan ranks; the "middling sort", as described by Christopher Hill, who, as masters and fathers, sought to discipline those in their charge.[4] The influence of this group reached its peak during the Interregnum when they were able to subject most of the nation to

2. Malcolmson, *Op Cit*: Bushaway, *Op Cit*.

3. P. Burke, *Op Cit*, pp 207-43.

4. Hill, *Op Cit*, pp 133-4.

unprecedented cultural control. Of course that led to much bitterness among the population as a whole and by 1650 there was a marked cleavage in the attitudes, values and mores of the rulers and the ruled.

The unpopularity of the Puritan regime goes some way to explain the enthusiasm with which the majority of the English people greeted the Restoration. For many the rejoicing which greeted the return of Charles II in 1660 marked a welcome return to a more benevolent social order, one in which harmony, community and tolerance prevailed. This state of affairs continued for perhaps a century. It was only after 1750 that social groups began to diverge once more as the middling and upper sort found reason in the context of first the agricultural and, then, the industrial revolution to demand more in the way of discipline and order. This was the crucial period for rejoicing and ritual which as the most obvious medium for indiscipline and disorder became an object of great criticism.

As in Europe the impact of this process varied over time and place. This will be illustrated in the following chapter which will look at the very different nature, pace and extent of the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures, first at Norwich, and then at Coventry. This may lead to a more intimate understanding of a major historical theme which, up to now, has largely been studied in national, or even continental terms.

In Norwich the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures was fairly typical of that in the nation as a whole. With Puritan rule disbanded there was, in the century which followed the Restoration, something of a reaction against the cultural discipline, not to say, repression, which had characterised the Interregnum. After 1660 there was a return to what many believed was the "traditional" and, moreover, the proper set of relations between the rulers and the ruled, the rich and the poor. One in which reciprocity, tolerance and a sense of the community as a social body in which all parts were required to work in harmony prevailed.

Robert Malcolmson has characterised this social outlook as the "conservative tradition"; "essentially backward looking" it idealised the concept of the unitary medieval community as the way in which society should work. As such it dominated the thinking of most English men and women in the years 1660-1750. But it did not have the field to itself; there was a rival tradition in the form of the "puritan outlook" - by no means totally extinguished at the Restoration - which co-existed with the conservative mentality for much of the eighteenth century. Its minority status in that period should not blind us to the fact that many of the attitudes associated with it - discipline, cultural restraint and detached respectability - were the very essence of the polite consensus which would triumph in the early nineteenth century.

But that would have to wait. For now such radical social thinking was generally despised. In the

century which followed the Restoration there was a backlash against "enthusiasm" of all sorts, particularly in the areas of religion and cultural reform. It was against this background that the Society for the Reformation of Manners - surely the most convincing evidence for the survival of the "puritan outlook" - so completely failed in its stated aim.[5]

In Norwich the Society was conspicuous by its absence; apparently it failed to make any impact at all on the second city of the Kingdom. That is not to say, however, that in the early eighteenth century there was no concern about plebeian behaviour. There was, but it was limited to certain practices and generally expressed only by those responsible for maintaining public order.

Within the festive arena there were four activities which worried the magistrates of Norwich before 1750. The first was the practice of throwing squibs and fireworks. The favourite occasion for such activity was November 5th which, as we have seen, was one of the most political anniversaries on the holiday calendar. As such it provided an all too apparent opportunity for disorder. In 1733, for example, the Tory crowd rioted in response to a series of provocative toasts from the Whig Artillery Company. Two weeks later the Mayor's Court announced that

whereas much mischief have happened by throwing, casting and firing squibs, serpents and other fireworks...the Right Worshipful Mr Mayor and the rest of His Majesty's justices of the peace for this city, do strictly forbid any person of what age or degree soever, throwing

5. Malcolmson, *Op Cit*, pp 158-60; Bahlman, The Moral Revolution of 1688.

any squibs, serpents or other fireworks on the public streets of this city, on the penalty of twenty shillings.

Significantly no mention was made of the occasion for this trouble; legitimated by the common prayer book and dear to the hearts of Freeborn Englishmen, the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot itself was not yet in the line of fire.[6]

The strictly limited nature of magisterial criticism upon this occasion was also apparent in 1767 when the Mayor issued a warning to "any persons who shall throw any squibs or other fireworks in the market or other places in this city" on either the anniversary of the King's inauguration or of the Gunpowder Plot two weeks later.[7] This differed from the earlier order only in its pre-emptive nature, not in its tone. It therefore represented a change of tactics rather than attitude on the part of the magistrates. As time wore on the notion that prevention was better than cure in this area of public life gained momentum. In 1783, for example, the Mayor laid the ground for a peaceful bonfire night by fining somebody offering squibs or fireworks for sale in October and convicting another for throwing them in the market place. At no stage, however, was the legitimacy of Bonfire Night itself brought into question.[8]

1781. Illuminations attracted a similar degree of interest from the magistrates of Norwich; this was the second of the four festive activities with which they wer

6. N.M Nov 17 1733. See chapter six

7. M.C.B Oct 17 1767.

8. N.M Oct 18 1783.

particularly concerned. As with the throwing of squibs the authorities preferred to anticipate rather than merely react to such events. In 1746, for example, they ordered all persons intending to illuminate on the day of thanksgiving for the victory at Culloden to have their lights extinguished by ten "to prevent any damage by fire". As an additional precaution the constables were instructed to attend the Watch in their respective wards "in order to preserve the peace and safety of the inhabitants." [9]

As the remarks of the magistrates on this occasion suggest, an illumination was, potentially, quite a threat to public order. Used as an expression of popular joy at news of a victory in war or of some other good fortune for the nation as a whole, they were one of the clearest examples of what Victor Turner has termed a "manifestation of communitas"; displays of collective solidarity in which the essential equality and unity of the community is emphasised at the expense of individual rights or notions of hierarchy. Anyone who did not participate in such displays - by not lighting up during an illumination, for example - pitted themselves against the community as a whole and, therefore, deserved to be punished. Thus in the illumination which followed the news of the capture of the Isle of St Eustatius in March 1781, for example, the Norwich crowd smashed the windows of those abstaining from it with impunity. [10]

9. N.G. Sept 29 1746.

10. V. Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and anti-Structure, p 126-7: N.M. March 17 1781.

In general those with an interest in structure and hierarchy view manifestations of *communitas* as dangerous and anarchic and attempt either to minimise their occurrence or surround them with prescriptions, prohibitions and conditions. The reaction of the authorities to illuminations at Norwich in the eighteenth century was, therefore, understandable. Only too aware of the threat to property and "liberty" implicit in such activity, the magistrates of the city tried their level best to prevent it. On the twenty first birthday of George, Prince of Wales, in 1783, for example, they moved quickly to dampen the popular enthusiasm for an illumination; arguing that the Prince had "attained his majority at eighteen" the magistrates announced that they would "give no countenance to illuminations until a thanksgiving day shall be appointed for the peace". Similarly on the centenary of the Glorious Revolution in November 1788 they specifically forbade an illumination and in doing so expressed "their disapprobation of a practice which is always attended with much inconvenience and sometimes productive of mischievous consequences to the inhabitants." [11]

Illuminations, then, were the cause of considerable worry for the magistrates. However the control of bonfires - the traditional focus of commensality and communal warmth upon many occasions for rejoicing - presented them with even greater difficulties. For bonfires were perhaps the most legitimate and popular of all the elements in the festive

11. Turner, *Op Cit*, pp 108-9: N.M Aug 9 1783: M.C.B Nov 1 1788.

repertoire. As such they could hardly be forbidden. Consequently the magistrates were forced to take a rather softer line, attempting regulation rather than repression. Thus on November 5th, 1788 the Mayor organised some wood for the projected fire and directed the constables of the city "to attend in the evening to preserve the peace and to prevent accidents". By doing this the magistrates hoped to prevent the normal holiday practice of feeding the flames with wooden gates and stalls from the market and to provide an effective means of dispersing revellers who otherwise would remain at the scene until the early hours of the morning.[12]

The Bonfire was the third holiday tradition with which the magistrates were particularly concerned. The fourth was cock throwing. This sport, associated chiefly with the period before and including Shrove Tuesday, was one of the earliest objects of magisterial criticism in the eighteenth century city. As early as 1727 the Mayor's Court condemned the "great disorders committed by divers idle persons throwing at cocks in the market place, castle dykes and other places in this city", and warned that they would use the Riot Act against three or more people gathered for that purpose.[13]

Their recourse to this legislative sledgehammer suggests some of the difficulties of the magistrates in confronting such a traditional and popular sport. Even so cock throwing was, as Robert Malcolmson points out, probably the most vulnerable holiday practice of all. For

12. M.C.B Nov 1 1788.

13. N.M Feb 4 1727.

in the context of a growing debate over animal sports, in general, the practice of firing missiles at a bird tied to a stake was open to particular criticism. Highly cruel it was also perceived as very unfair. In this respect the comparison with cock fighting is instructive; an equally cruel sport, at least it provided the cock with a chance to survive, even if it was at the expense of a fellow creature. Just as importantly cock fighting enjoyed the support and the patronage of people from every social group, whereas cock throwing was primarily a plebeian sport. As such it was particularly prone to attack.[14]

The magistrates of Norwich repeated their order against throwing at cocks in nearly every year after 1727. Their failure to repress the sport in the 1730's and '40's is an indication of how strongly "traditional" values prevailed in the century following the Restoration. It was not until 1753 that a successful campaign was launched against the sport; led not by the magistrates but by the editor of the Norwich Mercury. Intervening "on behalf of a part of our fellow creatures that cannot speak for themselves and are about to be exposed without cause...to a merciless humour of a barbarous, insensible, mob" he argued that the "wretched custom of throwing or shooting at cocks...initiates the youth into cruelty and vice; is a reproach to the nation and an act of rebellion against the common parent and supporter of all things."

That it was the editor of the local paper who led the campaign against cock throwing at this stage is

highly significant. He was, by virtue of his position and contacts, one of the most sophisticated and also the most powerful, members of the middling sort in Norwich. Literate, increasingly assertive, and ever more aware of the interests and attitudes shared by his kind, he and others like him laid the foundations for the development of a polite consensus in respect of plebeian excess. The fact that the editor's comments echo similar thoughts articulated in the Gentleman's Magazine at about the same time illustrate the more general nature of this movement. In such national campaigns one can see the first manifestations of the class consciousness which would increasingly inform the debate over popular rejoicing and public ritual.[15]

In the week following the editor's comments the Mayor's Court directed the Bellman to "give notice throughout this city that all persons committing disorders by 'throwing' at cocks will be prosecuted as the Law directs." The constables of the city were ordered to apprehend such "disorderly persons" and in early March a man was fined three shillings and four pence as a result.[16]

These actions did not bring an immediate end to cock throwing in Norwich. In February 1759 the Mayor's Court had to direct the constables to patrol the streets to enforce the ban on the sport. But although progress was slow it was certain. By the late eighteenth century there is no further evidence of such activity in the

15. N.M Feb 10 1753: Gentleman's Magazine XX111 (1753)

5.

16. N.M Feb 24 1753, March 10 1753.

city. Later, in 1872, an antiquarian could note that even the "fat hen" - the last feminine resort of those determined to evade the letter of the law against throwing at cocks - was no longer threshed in Norfolk; "a barbarous sport" it had not been practiced for many years.[17]

The campaign against cock throwing at Norwich illustrates not only the growing opposition towards many plebeian pursuits during the eighteenth century, but also its changing nature and extent. Increasingly it was being articulated by civilians as well as magistrates and characterised by moral arguments as much as by a concern for order. In this shift we see the first evidence of the development of a distinctively polite world view which, in the early nineteenth century, would prove so damaging to rejoicing and ritual.

In the 1750's, however, the views expressed by those like the editor of the Norwich Mercury were somewhat ahead of their time. This was also true of those articulated by William Arderon, local naturalist and Fellow of the Royal Society. Nevertheless his views are of interest both because they are evidence of the gathering momentum behind the polite critique of plebeian

17. M.C.B Feb 17 1759: John Glyde, Norfolk Garland, p 113. Cock throwing was the first and practically the only plebeian practice to be eliminated in this way. Other animal sports survived. Charles Hardy recalled that, in the 1830's, Lollard Pit by the River Wensum "was the scene of bull baiting, dog fighting, and such like coarse and brutal sports." As elsewhere a thorough reformation of this aspect of popular behaviour would have to wait until the period following Municipal Reform. C. Hardy, Memories of Norwich and its inhabitants fifty years ago, p 15.

behaviour in Norwich and because they anticipate what was to come.

Arderon was concerned chiefly with aspects of public behaviour. He was highly critical of many contemporary practices; the public use by "both rich and poor" of chamber pots in inns and alehouses, the way in which the old and young flocked to funerals and the custom of prying into the windows of "houses which are against the streets" were just some of the many he objected to.

He was particularly annoyed by many of the customs associated with the holiday calendar. He objected, for instance, to the tendency "to ring the bells or fire the canon upon any frivolous occasion." Arguing that this should not be permitted "for it prevents there being of service when any good news doth arise" he stated that, given the choice, he "would not have any bells rung but for divine service" unless the magistrates directed otherwise.

Arderon reserved particular scorn for the custom of wrestling at Easter, Whitsun and during the Assize. Apparently on these occasions "a great number of men and boys... [got] together upon the Castle hill, Chapelfields and other public places" and formed themselves into a ring. Thus assembled one of their number would then step forward and issue a challenge to wrestle. When one of the group had accepted "they [began] to kick each others legs with all the force and violence they [were] able with shoes which hath their soles prepared and sharpened against the day." They often

carried on like this until the loser collapsed - shoes filled with blood - after which a fresh challenger would step into the ring. These matches - " one of the foolishhest diversions ...in Britain" according to Arderon - would go on for five or six hours at a time. The contestants might feel the ill effects for months, or even years, after the event.

Like an increasing number of his contemporaries Arderon reserved his severest criticisms, in respect of rejoicing and ritual, for the holiday calendar of the poor; that collection of days - described so comprehensively by Bob Bushaway - upon which the labouring poor were licensed to beg from their social and economic betters. In the urban environment of Norwich that calendar was relatively restricted. In fact Plough Monday and Boxing Day were apparently the only two occasions when the poor were permitted to travel from house to house to solicit gifts of money and food. Although doles were also given on Ash Wednesday and St Thomas's Day they were of a qualitatively different nature; provided from corporate funds they were given only to the deserving poor.

Of all the dates on the holiday calendar of the poor Arderon took particular exception to Boxing Day when apprentices and journeymen would go from house to house to beg their due. In his view " nothing ...[could] be more ridiculous" as on that day Norwich could be said to be

the richest and poorest town in England, for from morning to night...half of it is going about a begging...[while in the evening] the

poorest scarce wants a pocket full of money and a belly full of liquor.

He estimated that "two hundred pounds and upwards...[was] fooled away" on that day "with no other view than to keep up a silly ancient custom." [18]

It is significant that in his original draft Arderon had described this practice as "troublesome" rather than ridiculous. In doing so he hinted at the real cause of his concern. For as Bob Bushaway has pointed out it was the violence or the threat of violence which accompanied these doling rituals which really upset the middling and upper sort; the charge that they were peculiar or anachronistic was merely an ostensible justification for the polite attack upon a custom which, whether in the form of ploughing up the land of ungenerous householders on Plough Monday or Lent Crocking on Shrove Tuesday, all too often brought unpleasant consequences for their property and person. [19]

Seen in this light the critique of plebeian traditions offered by Arderon, and those like him, in the middle of the eighteenth century was not very different from that of the magistrates earlier in the century. Both were concerned primarily with the threat to order such behaviour posed. As yet questions of morality or decorum took second place.

This continued to be the case for the rest of the eighteenth century in Norwich. There were, however,

18. Arderon Papers (N.N.R.O MS 555 241).

19. Bushaway, *Op Cit*, pp 169-71. Lent Crocking involved showering those who refused to give a dole of food or money with missiles of broken crockery.

two major changes to the arguments about unruly plebeian behaviour; firstly that they were now made by civilians rather than magistrates and secondly that the frequency of such complaints increased dramatically. Furthermore they were now no longer limited to activities associated with the holiday calendar; everyday practices too came under the scrutiny of the polite. In January 1770, for example, the Mayor's Court offered a reward of two guineas for any information leading to the prosecution of the perpetrators of "divers insults...offered to women passing the streets of this city" in the night, while in September 1788 a correspondent felt obliged to write to the editor of the Mercury requesting him "to observe that some mishchievous boys have lately made a practice of throwing aqua fortis or vitriol upon the gowns of women passing along the streets." Arguing that "it is the duty of every individual to promote the general welfare" of the society to which they belong the writer hoped that his information would lead to "the detection of those idle young miscreants to whom it alludes". Over a month later the Mercury reported that, in London, two boys had been whipped and imprisoned for the same offence.

Similarly in May 1827 a correspondent drew the paper's attention to the nightly presence of boys and girls at London Lane, in the city centre, whose "obscene language, noises and general riotous conduct...have become a nuisance to the inhabitants as well as to passers by." In demanding action from the Mayor and his fellow magistrates, the writer provided information on

the situation in other large towns where such people were put on the tread wheel. In the same edition the Mercury reported that two boys had been apprehended for sliding on pavements " a practice which ought to be put a stop to, being so very dangerous to passengers in the night." [20]

All of this is evidence of the growing void between the polite and the plebeian in the city of Norwich; of a divergence of interests and attitudes which, by the time of Municipal Reform, would see the upper and middling classes withdrawing from and occasionally seeking to repress more and more elements of the people's culture, in general, and the holiday calendar, in particular.

Even so until the end of the eighteenth century the criticisms aimed at plebeian behaviour remained of a highly selective kind. Thus although particular practices - bonfires, illuminations, cock throwing and the like - were roundly condemned, the legitimacy of rejoicing and ritual itself was rarely questioned. Much of it after all was specifically sanctioned by the church and state.

It was only in the early nineteenth century that this began to change, as those who perceived themselves as polite turned their attention to the occasions as well as the instances of plebeian excess. The turn of the tide in this respect was first apparent at Norwich in 1805¹ during the debate on how the victory and subsequent death of Nelson at Trafalgar should be celebrated. The relatively constrained response to this

20. N.M Jan 3 1770, Sept 6 1788, Oct 25 1788, May 25 1827.

event in the city of Nelson's youth provides the first indication of a breakdown in the consensus which, until then, had governed the conduct of public festivity in Norwich.

The immediate response to the victory at Trafalgar was deceptively normal. The announcement of the Corporation's intention to go into mourning for a week was widely expected to be no more than a decorous prelude to widescale rejoicing on the day of national thanksgiving soon to be appointed. The appearance of the garrison and the volunteer corps on the Castle ditches to fire a feu-de-joie, and the private dinners which followed, only served to confirm that opinion.

It was with some surprise, therefore, that on November 30th, only a week or so before the day of thanksgiving, the Mercury announced that "ball, supper, dinner, bonfire and illumination" along with all the other events so eagerly and universally expected "have vanished." Admitting to its own anticipation of widespread rejoicing "for the first of victories obtained by the first of British admirals" the paper expressed its disappointment and surprise that "some respected character" did not step forward to rally the ready citizens to the cause. The editor concluded by asking whether this indicated "an almost total extinction of the public spirit - or...a disunion which not even the victories of a Nelson...have the power to remove." In making such comments the paper hoped that it would "stand acquitted of any attack upon the opinion of that reverend order, the clergy, which has in some

sort been expressed against any other than a religious oblation of thanks on that day". For while it agreed that this should take priority it could not help but note that, on thanksgiving, every other town would ring with joy and that "Norwich alone is silent."

In the event "some respected character", in the person of Lieutenant Colonel Patteson, local brewer and future mayor, did step forward to organise a public dinner in Ranelagh gardens. But even this was poorly attended, and while the Mercury excused this on the grounds that there were private parties elsewhere, its disappointment was clear; in the city of his schooling the greatest triumph of the most valiant Englishman of all time had gone, largely, unheeded.[21]

To understand why it is necessary to place the event in the context of the deteriorating relations between polite and plebeian society in Norwich, 1805 had been a particularly inauspicious year in this respect. At the very beginning of the year several young men "apprentices and others" had been fined for playing cards until a late hour at a local inn. The innkeeper was also fined, forty shillings, for his complicity in the affair. Just one month later two apprentices were put in the House of Correction for swearing in the aptly named "gentleman's walk", while in March a publican was fined "for suffering tippling at an unseasonable hour". Not since the Interregnum had plebeian culture been subjected to such close regulation.[22]

21. N.M Nov 16, 22, 30, Dec 7, 1805.

22. N.M Jan 5, Feb 2, March 9 1805.

Not surprisingly there was soon a popular reaction against such cultural restraint. Appropriately this became apparent on the anniversary of the Gunpowder plot when a crowd, gathered in the Castle ditches, attacked several constables who attempted to disperse them. They then performed a charivari against the Mayor; carrying a man on a piece of wood they marched "in a menacing manner" towards his house which they attempted to assail. Two days later the Mayor's Court offered a reward of five guineas for information leading to the conviction "of the person riding on the piece of wood...or of any...who carried it." [23] Against such a tumultuous background it is easy to see why the establishment at Norwich was so keen to avoid extensive rejoicing for Trafalgar.

Of course, as the Mercury had pointed out, within the establishment it was the clergy, above all, who disputed the need for a popular input into the celebration of Nelson's victory. Their particular influence upon this occasion was an indication of their very special role in the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures at Norwich and elsewhere during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Much of their enthusiasm for the reform of popular culture at this time stemmed directly from the growth of the Evangelical movement after 1788. Initiated by Wilberforce and others like him who were concerned at the distinct lack of religious zeal among the English people in that period and consolidated in the campaign

against the slave trade and the advent of war with France, this was the most important single cultural development at Norwich in the forty years before Municipal Reform. As such it deserves particular attention.

Some measure of its impact - not just upon the clergy but also among the people as a whole - can be gained from a report in the Norwich Mercury on the state of the city in 1816. By this time Evangelicism had brought about a complete change in the social atmosphere and a transformation of attitudes towards active religion. Commenting on how "religious duties are more earnestly attended to than a few years back" the paper highlighted the success of the Nonconformist sects, in general, and of the Wesleyan Methodists, in particular. The last group had won 1400 converts in Norfolk during the previous two years and built six new chapels - the largest of which was in Norwich - to accomodate them. The Baptists had also done very well; their sucess at recruiting in Norwich had obliged them to build two new meeting houses in the last four years.

In assessing the particular success of the Wesleyan Methodists the Mercury commented that there

appears to be scarcely a doubt of their ultimate ascendancy over all the lower classes...unless it be counteracted by a timely and most zealous application of national education on the part of the supporters of the establishment.

Not that the Anglican clergy were complacent. In fact they were said to be "awake and alive to the endeavours

as well as the means of proselytism." Some measure of their success in meeting the challenge of Dissent can be gained from the frequent use of the numerous churches in the city. With the Cathedral open three times a day, with a service at the largest of the thirty six parishes twice on a Sunday, and with lectures in several of them during the evening, there was ample provision " for the religious and moral instruction of the people." The inhabitants of the city responded well; in September 1817 there were one thousand applicants for confirmation at the Cathedral.[24]

The specific cultural effects of this religious revival were and are difficult to determine; a point the Mercury made well when it commented upon the simultaneous growth in the prison population. Nevertheless it clearly had some effect on the perception of plebeian manners. This was particularly true in relation to disorderly or disrespectful behaviour in church.

Of course this had always been a particularly sensitive issue; the mixture of the sacred and the prophane is generally very provocative. Even in 1779 - well before the Evangelical movement was under way - a soldier was whipped for his bad behaviour at St Peter Mancroft where his regiment had gathered for Christmas service. At the time " it was hoped that such exemplary punishment will deter others from such gross and scandalous acts of prophaneness and impiety."[25]

Nevertheless it is true that the later in the period one looks the more one is likely to find evidence

24. N.M Jan 4, March 1, Sept 6 1817.

25. N.M Jan 2 1779.

of such behaviour, and, more significantly, of commentaries upon it. In December 1817, for example, the Mercury "received several communications upon the subject of the indecorous behaviour of the congregation attending Sunday lectures", while Charles Hardy, looking back at the 1830's, felt obliged to describe the "wild condition" of the farmers in the parish of Halvergate, just outside Norwich, who "always brought their dogs to church...which animals amused themselves by coursing one another round the church and jumping over the pews." [26]

But perhaps the most vitriolic comment of the period in this respect was made in reaction to the behaviour of the crowd at the service of remembrance for the Duke of York on January 20 1827. The anticipation of his demise in the previous weeks and the solemn displays upon and immediately after his death led many in Norwich to imagine "that not only a more than ordinary procession of the Corporation would take place, but that the service at the Cathedral would be performed with unusual splendour." As a result thousands of people flocked to the Church on the day, in spite of "a cold piercing wind". The crowds were such that, at noon, the Cathedral doors collapsed under the pressure of those attempting to get in.

It was, thus, only with the greatest of difficulty that the Corporation gained entry. They were greeted by whistles and catcalls from people who stood on the chairs to gain a better view. Worse was to come; during the time of the service boys ran around the altar,

a chapel pillar was torn down, and missiles were thrown around the Church.

The Mercury responded to these events sharply. In a distinct change of mood from earlier commentaries upon public ritual they suggested that since

noise, confusion and irreverence are perhaps such inseparable attendants upon ceremonies of this kind...it may be justly considered a very doubtful question, whether they answered the intended purpose.

While it conceded that " it seems impossible for the public authorities" to extricate themselves from such affairs, the paper implied that since much of the trouble came from " a partial admission of the public" the answer might lie in their complete exclusion.[27]

The attitude of the Mercury on this occasion reflected an increasing sense of outrage among many members of the middle and upper classes in the city towards such misbehaviour in church. Clearly the Evangelical movement was one reason why the intensity of such feeling had grown; it had acted in many ways as a catalyst for the crystallization of " respectable" views on a subject which had traditionally aroused much distaste. But it was not the only one. For a full explanation of the cause it is necessary to locate the growing sensitivity towards such incidents within the general context of a divergence of polite and plebeian cultures.

This had accelerated sharply since 1750. To understand why it is necessary to look beyond the

Evangelical movement towards longer term developments in the social and economic life of the city. The first is the growth in the confidence and the consciousness of the middling sort; by the 1820's they felt and acted as a class. As such their interests were a world removed from those of the labouring poor who made up the working class of the city. This was particularly obvious in the arena of public festivity and pleasure, where they increasingly moved in different and separate circles; the middle class in assembly rooms, music festivals and the theatre, the working class in the alehouse and on the street.

The second was the decline of the textile industry. This brought unemployment, poverty and despair to the labouring poor of Norwich. In the formation of class such experience could only lead to a defensive and occasionally hostile proletariat. This, in turn, aggravated the already evident polarisation of society at Norwich.

The more the textile industry declined the greater was the tension between the classes in the city. This reached a peak in the late 1820's when the woollen trade was particularly depressed. It is, therefore, no surprise that the episode at the Cathedral described above took place in 1827, one year after the manufacture of worsteds at Norwich had entered its last terminal decline.

The novel degree of tension which that introduced to the relations between the classes at Norwich was further illustrated, in the same year, by the reaction to the festivities for the passage of a

parliamentary bill to make Norwich a port. Coming in May, just three months after the remembrance ceremony for the Duke of York, the authorities obviously anticipated trouble. They were right to do so. For in the evening a bonfire was erected in the market place and spouts, watchboxes and palings were taken from nearby houses to fuel it. When the constables stepped in they were vigorously resisted; the ringleaders they captured were immediately rescued by their fellows and the door of the gaol itself was submitted to the flames. After that the revellers stayed at the scene until the early hours of the following day.

Subsequently a correspondent wrote a letter to "the city authorities" in which he complained of "an evil custom prevalent in this city of committing great deprivations on all occasions of public rejoicing". Referring specifically to the bonfire above he suggested that "ten or a dozen stout constables" should be placed around the fire to check the material used and seize any troublemakers either at the point of offence or, where appropriate, in the days which followed. By such measures he hoped for "an end" to "this villainous practice of rejoicing at the expense of other people's peace and prosperity." [28]

Two things were significant about this letter. First that it was signed; by G. Beamont, this illustrated a novel degree of confidence from those prepared to criticise plebeian excess. Secondly the reference to "rejoicing". Clearly Mr Beamont did not just mean

bonfires; he was equally concerned by other disorderly holiday activities.

He was not alone. Many members of the middle and upper classes in the city now shared his concern. One of the causes of greatest anxiety was the practice of illumination. As with bonfires the opposition to this most traditional of festive forms grew progressively during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as the polite critique of plebeian excess gathered momentum. At Norwich it reached a peak in 1832, in the run up to the celebrations for the passage of the Bill to reform the franchise.

The form of those celebrations became a subject of great debate, not just at Norwich, but in the country as a whole. The issue of whether there should be an illumination was in the forefront of many minds. The proposal that there should be one at Norwich was opposed vigorously by many in the middle and upper classes who made it clear that they would not subscribe to the event unless the question of whether to illumine or not was left to be "separately and individually determined."

Given their past experience of such events this was hardly surprising. Illuminations had, after all, been the occasion for some of the most disorderly and destructive festivity in the city. Their feelings on this count were subsequently reinforced by the Mayor who obligingly declared that he would not light up as "the season of the year is unsuited and it must engender

tumult or impose a necessity upon those who dissent which is contrary to the spirit of fair toleration." [29]

In the event there was no general illumination. Moreover the rejoicing which did take place was highly regulated and characterised by silence and order. The triumph of the polite point of view on this occasion was, of course, entirely appropriate. These were, after all, celebrations for the passage of the Bill for parliamentary reform, the single greatest act of political will by the middle class to that date. The success of this and, three years later, of the legislation to dissolve the municipal corporations signalled the end of the "ancien regime" and the beginning, in the eyes of some, of a new, better and, crucially, a more respectable order. Within such a society there was no obvious place for illumination or, for that matter, any other plebeian excess. This would be confirmed during the debate over municipal reform when there was a sharp division between the Whigs and the Tories of the city. In opposing that measure the latter made great play of the festivity associated with the status quo; we will see this clearly in the following chapter on the Guild. In contrast the former showed absolutely no desire to use rejoicing and ritual to further their cause and even though, partly as a result of that decision, they lost the local campaign, they did prevail in the nation as a whole.

Reform, then, represented a cultural as well as a political landmark in the history of Norwich. It confirmed, once and for all, the triumph of "polite" over "plebeian" values and the associated decline of old style rejoicing and ritual. Of course this triumph had not been achieved overnight. Rather it was the product of over a century of cultural change. In examining that change at Norwich it has been possible to identify a "chronology of reform"; commencing in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century when the concerns about festivity and other plebeian behaviour were limited to questions of public order and articulated almost solely by magistrates, moving on to the fifty years after 1750 when a distinctively polite world view began to emerge and ending in the early nineteenth century when the reform of popular culture, in general, and the holiday calendar, in particular, began in earnest. Just as importantly it has also proved possible to identify who the polite were. In general terms they were of the middling and upper sort; people who increasingly felt their social and cultural interests to be at variance with that of "the people" as a whole. Of course within their ranks there were certain key figures; those like the editor of the Norwich Mercury in 1753 or William Arderon during the same decade who anticipated the arguments to come, and, later in the period the clergy who were to play a particularly important role in the formation of respectable opinion in the city.

All of these figures shared a common inheritance. They were educated, literate and, most

importantly, they all came from the middle or upper ranks of society. Moreover they were also well travelled and aware of the thinking of contemporaries elsewhere; whether via university, the Bench or the Royal Society they had all been exposed to a wider community of interest than that in Norwich alone. According to Peter Burke this was one of the crucial factors in quickening the pace of reform.

However most of the middling and upper sort were not well travelled. For them the exposure towards what Robert Malcolmson has called "progressive" ways of thinking about "traditional" society had to take place closer to home; within the alternative cultural framework which had been created at Norwich in the late eighteenth century.

The elements of that framework were many and various; all, however, were distinctively polite. The Theatre, the Assembly Rooms and the Triennial Music festival are the most obvious examples. But perhaps the key event for the development of a particularly genteel world view was the assize. It is to the history of that event to which we will now turn.

During the course of the eighteenth century the Summer assize had become the principle focus for the gathering of the middling sort, from Norwich and Norfolk. The occasion for balls, assemblies, concerts, public

breakfasts and the like it acted chiefly as a marriage market where like could meet and court like.[30]

It also acted as a showcase for the best aspects of polite culture. This was an important element in the attraction of the assize for the middling sort; inherently evangelical they were always keen to export their values to a society they wished to reform. Some idea of their sense of mission in this respect can be gained from a report of the Mercury in 1817 which, having described the assize of that year, noted

that a character of increasing elegance pervades all our places of resort. Through this character we perceive that these softeners of manners are working a gradual amelioration of the society in which we live - a silent but sure advancement towards refinement.

Two years later the Mercury took great pride in the civilising virtues of the fine arts; "the communication [of which] though it proceeds by degrees yet touches all" and is leading to a general improvement in the manners of society as a whole.[31]

Despite such a generally hopeful outlook there was clearly a great deal still left for the polite to do, even in respect of the assize. The most obvious target for consideration was the traditional influx of beggars to Norwich for the event. Tolerated by the constables of the city, their licence on this occasion seems to have arisen from the widely held belief that, with the arrival of the Lord Justices appointed for the assize, the authority of the resident magistrates was suspended. Thus

30. See chapter three.

31. N.M Aug 9 1817, Aug 14 1819.

conceived the assize represented what Victor Turner has termed a liminal phase in the civic year; a period of time "betwixt and between" two distinct phases of local governance in which normal considerations of law and order were set aside and those on the margins - the limen - of society enjoyed an unusual degree of tolerance from a community temporarily reminded of its essentially unitary and homogenous nature.[32]

Such an interpretation of the assize is and was open to question. For generally that event, which provided the most important occasion in the provincial year for a display of the justice, majesty and terror of the Law, was associated with the maximisation of structure and authority rather than its dilution. That the beggars' licence continued to be observed is more of a comment upon the relatively tolerant and even indulgent nature of the relations between the rich and poor in eighteenth century England, than a tribute to the quality of the reasoning which justified it. However by the early nineteenth century things were beginning to change in this respect as the middling sort, in particular, displayed an increasing intolerance of the most threatening and intrusive aspects of plebeian behaviour, of which begging was an obvious example.

In 1819 it became the object of some concern. One month before the assize "a society for the suppression of mendicity" was established in the city. Conceived in the wake of the most serious small pox epidemic of the nineteenth century, it was primarily the

32. Turner, *Op Cit*, pp 95-6.

inspiration of the Hon Edward Harbord who was, at that time, the Member of Parliament for the city. He had joined a similar society in London and now wished to translate its success to Norwich. In doing so he provided one more example of how contact with those with similar interests outside of one's immediate community could help to develop the class consciousness not just of that individual but also of his or her peers. Thus, the progressively more frequent meetings of the gentry and the middling sort in parliament, on the Bench, at university, and during events like the assize, had been an important agent in the transformation of England from a society based on orders and closed, unitary, communities, to one characterised by class and motivated by a sense of common interest among those at a similar socio-economic level.[33]

Of course, along with M.Ps, few had been more in the forefront of such productive contact than newspaper editors. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the Mercury helped to focus the novel concern of its readers by investigating the beggars' behaviour. It was amazed by the level of "contributions...levied upon the ignorant" and by the "degree of impudence" with which it was done. Commenting that "every passenger was pursued with a pertinacity most perplexing" the paper concluded that "such a nuisance is a standing disgrace either to the laws or to the executive power." In the following week it was able to report that the Chief Justice, himself, had assured the Mayor that he and the other

33. N.M July 24 1819: Burke, Op Cit, pp 277-8.

magistrates " possess the same power during the assizes as during any other week." [34]

The campaign against begging at the assize proved to be the prelude to a complete withdrawal by many of the middling and upper classes from the event. Over the next fifteen years the Mercury looked for one reason after another to explain the fall in attendance at this once most prestigious of occasions on the city's holiday calendar. In 1819 the paper took comfort in the coincidence of the harvest, while in 1826 the clash with the Ipswich races was held responsible for the paucity of amusement during the week. To explain the appalling attendance they looked to " the depression of the times and the uncertainty...over agriculture." Even the fireworks at Ranelagh Gardens - the highlight of the week for many - suffered from the " falling off of company" to such a degree that the Mercury encouraged " those whose property is vested in such speculations" to adapt their preparations " to the change in the habits, pursuits, and manners of the middle class." [35]

Indeed this was the key to understanding the decline of the assize. More confident, coherent and secure, many among the middle class saw no need and had no desire to expose themselves to the public gaze any more. The literary society, the concert and, not least, the parlour provided both a more respectable and a more regular alternative to such an ostentatious display of solidarity. By 1835 the Mercury was forced to admit that the assize

34. N.M Aug 14, 21, 1819.

35. Aug 14 1819, June 24 1826.

which in our remembrance used to be the season when the country population was concentrated in Norwich...is now scarcely to be distinguished by any access of company beyond the ordinary course and current of the time.

The excuses offered in previous years - the harvest, the weather, or the depression of agriculture - amounted to little more than self delusion. In fact

the recurrence of the same appearances - streets exhibiting little of the lively bustle of a full town - the ordinary quiet of the inns and shops - the comparative emptiness of the places of amusement - all concur in proving that the dispositions of the people are changed.[36]

The history of the Norwich assize illuminates a great deal about the nature, pace and extent of the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures at Norwich. Formerly the focus for the development of distinctively genteel attitudes and aspirations among the middling and upper sort this and similar events had provided the social space in which members of those groups could function apart from the mob to meet and cultivate others of a comparable status and in doing so realise a sense of common interest. In this respect it was clearly crucial to the formation of class consciousness in Norwich.

However by the second decade of the nineteenth century the assize had served its purpose; now the middle class, in particular, had rather more private arenas for their

pleasure. Moreover the members of that class were now confident and secure; they did not need the stimulus of such a public occasion to reassure them. As a result more and more of them neglected to attend. Indeed the assize - and, in particular, the begging associated with it - was now perceived as just one more distasteful example of a society which the more self consciously polite members of the middle and upper classes in Norwich and elsewhere were determined to leave behind..

At Norwich, then, the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures was relatively advanced by 1835. This was not, however, true of Coventry. There the nature, the pace and the extent of cultural change was far more limited.

Consequently evidence of critical attitudes towards popular culture, in general, and public festivity, in particular, during the period from the Restoration to Municipal Reform, is rather thin. Among the magistrates the most prolific opponent of plebeian "vice" was John Hewitt, Mayor, for the first of three times, in 1756. Shortly after taking office he announced his intention

to suppress the playing at cards, dice, tables, tennis, coits, skittles, nine pins, billiards, shuffle boards, horse races, foot races, cock fightings, dog matches and other unlawful games.

Furthermore, in a manner resonant of his Puritan predecessors, he also warned that those who broke the sabbath would be punished, as would " alehouse keepers, or victuallers, [who] suffer tippling in their houses." To this end he offered rewards for informers and protection for " apprentices and journeymen...from the displeasure of their masters." [37]

However Hewitt was an exception. At least in public there were few on either the Corporation or the Bench who shared his zeal. Indeed among the magistrates and ruling class of Coventry in the eighteenth century there was little appetite for the reform of popular culture, even of its most excessive aspects. As a result civilian critics of plebeian behaviour were left high and dry; unsupported by the authorities they were forced to tolerate the most violent and offensive of customs. Thus a victim of an illumination to celebrate the victory of Admiral Rodney in March 1780 could only resort to a mixture of sarcasm and pleading as a response. Begging that " the regulators" of such events in the future be directed " not to break any windows in the room where the master or mistress of the house are gone to bed" he could only ask for more specific instructions regarding the manner, the extent and the duration of " lighting up". Signing his letter " a well wisher to the liberties of Englishmen" he did not even bother to call for increased police protection against such customary, and all too legitimate, manifestations of joy. [38]

37. John Hewitt, Journal, p 41.

38. J.C.M March 6 1780.

The lackadaisical attitude of the magistrates towards such events was also apparent in 1785 when they gave their permission for rejoicing on November 5th, despite the growing and stated opposition of many of the more respectable, property owning, inhabitants of the city. Given such licence it was hardly surprising that the event was celebrated enthusiastically by many of the lower orders with "an innumerable quantity of squibs, crackers, serpents and all manner of combustibles." In the word of the Coventry Mercury this was all done without the slightest regard for "the great terror of the inhabitant" or even the "apparent danger" to the "buildings of this ancient and respectable city." [39]

It was only from the beginning of the nineteenth century that the authorities in Coventry showed some concern about the consequences of popular joy. In 1801-2, for example, they were willing and able to contain the rejoicing to greet the cease fire with the French and the subsequent, but temporary, Peace of Amiens. A committee set up under the chairmanship of the Mayor was able to resist pressure for an illumination, or any other festivity, until the conclusion of the Treaty in April. Moreover when the celebrations did take place they were confined to Easter Monday and tightly regulated; one further example of how those with an interest in social structure strive to surround manifestations of *communitas* with prescriptions, prohibitions and conditions. [40]

Nevertheless, despite this particular magisterial tour de force, it remains true that, over the

39. J.C.M Nov 7 1785.

40. J.C.M Nov 9 1801, April 5, 19, 26, 1802.

period as a whole, and especially after 1750, the Corporation and the justices of Coventry were a good deal less interventionist when it came to displays of popular joy than their counterparts in Norwich. This both reflected and sustained a relatively limited divergence of polite and plebeian cultures in the city.

To understand why there was so little cultural conflict in Coventry, when compared to Norwich, it is necessary to return to the social, economic and political context. For the purpose of this discussion perhaps the most significant feature of life in the city during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the existence of a large, homogenous, confident and prosperous class of artisans. Operating within a highly protected and diverse economy they were able to maintain a relatively benign economic and cultural regime until the middle of the nineteenth century. This was in contrast to Norwich where, although the working class was equally large, it was progressively impoverished and dependent. Consequently their culture was liable to suppression and change, while that of their contemporaries in Coventry was secure.

At a more specific level the polite attack upon plebeian culture in Norwich was facilitated to some extent by the Evangelical movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In Coventry this particular impetus to cultural change was largely absent. There the peak of popular religion had passed; by the 1800's even the once fanatical Nonconformists had lost their appeal. In a city which had been so thoroughly

affected by Old Dissent, the failure of the new variety to take root was all the more striking. Neither Methodism nor Anglican revivalism made any major impact upon the inhabitants of Coventry. Indeed there was a great deal of irreligion in the nineteenth century city. This was certainly the impression of a Wesleyan preacher who visited and worked in Coventry during 1842. He wrote of it as " a large and wicked place" where of " 32,000 inhabitants it is computed that 24,000 make no profession of religion, attend no place of worship and to a fearful extent are evangelically untouched." His impressions were confirmed by the religious census of 1851 which revealed that only forty percent of the population attended chapel or church. [41]

Of course the Evangelical movement was only a short term factor in the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures at Norwich. Over the long term it was the polarisation of the community at the social, political and economic level which had the greatest impact upon relations in the city. Again this was largely absent at Coventry where, among other things, there was no slump in the staple industry; the root cause of much of the conflict in Norwich.

The contrast between the two cities in this respect was nowhere clearer than in the arena of parliamentary politics. It was never sharper than in the struggle over Reform. For while the voters of Norwich were fundamentally, almost irreconcilably, divided between the supporters of the ancien regime (Tories),

41. Tiratsoo, *Op Cit*, p 108. This compares to the national average of 61%.

and those seeking institutional change (Whigs), the electorate of Coventry was comparatively united behind the schemes to broaden the franchise and get rid of the corporations.

The schism at Norwich over Reform had important consequences for popular rejoicing and public ritual; the attempts of the Tories to appropriate civic regalia, for example, left that particular feature of the festive repertoire in a very vulnerable position after they had been defeated. Moreover the Reformers used their victory to undermine many more of the less " respectable" aspects of popular culture in subsequent years. This will become clear in the following study of the Guild Day. At Coventry, however, this was not the case, at least not to the same extent. For in that city there was no real attempt by the opponents of Reform to hijack civic or popular culture for the benefit of their cause. With such a large part of the population in favour of the proposed measures, it would have been impossible for them to do so. Besides, as we shall see in chapter ten on the Godiva procession, the Corporation had largely disengaged itself from festive life by the late 1820's. Consequently rejoicing and ritual was hardly affected by its eventual abolition.

A large, homogenous and prosperous working class, general indifference to religion, and a lack of polarisation at the social, economic and political level; all of these things militated against a sharp divergence of polite and plebeian cultures . In general Coventry remained a comparatively stable and harmonious community.

Admittedly there were developments which slowly undermined this state of affairs, notably the split in the journeyman class between first handers and second handers, the rise of the master manufacturers and the emergence of a Laissez-Faire economic philosophy among a section of the city's population. But the ultimate effects of these changes were not felt until after Municipal Reform. The geographical differentiation of classes and the breakdown of the List of Prices, for example, did not begin until the 1840's. Moreover the repeal of the Silk Acts - which dealt the final blow to the moral economy of the city - did not happen until after 1860. Before Reform Coventry remained something of an anachronism. With a protected economy, surrounded by common lands, and governed by a closed, corrupt and anti democratic corporation the city was like an eighteenth century island in a nineteenth century sea. It was hardly surprising, then, that it enjoyed relative social harmony.

In conclusion it only remains to underline the very different nature, pace and extent of the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures in Norwich and Coventry. In the former that process - and the reform of rejoicing and ritual associated with it - progressed very much as it did in the nation as a whole. There was very little in the way of a systematic attack upon plebeian behaviour

until after 1750 and even then it was restricted to relatively few practices and made by only a small number of "progressive" individuals. It was only from the beginning of the nineteenth century that the culture of the people at large came under critical scrutiny and only really in the 1820's and 1830's that those who ascribed to polite values withdrew from it. In the latter cultural polarisation was much less apparent, even at the end of the period.

The difference between the two cities in this respect can only be explained by reference to their particular social, political and economic development in the period as a whole. In Norwich the decline of the textile trade, the consequent immiserisation of the poor and the creation of an alternative cultural framework and set of values by the middle class combined to erode the social consensus established after the Restoration and, ultimately, led to an attack on a progressively greater range of plebeian activities, not least those associated with rejoicing and ritual. In Coventry, on the other hand, the flourishing economy and the continuing good fortune of a strong, confident and relatively homogenous working class created the conditions in which comparative harmony prevailed and where there was little in the way of an attempt to reform popular culture, in general, or public festivity, in particular.

Chapter Nine.

The Guild Day in Norwich 1660-1835.

Until now this thesis has involved the examination of popular rejoicing and public ritual, in general, at Norwich and Coventry from the Restoration to Municipal Reform. The development of a number of central themes - notably the commercialisation and the changing political utility of public festivity - has led to the sacrifice of "depth" for "breadth" and the predominance of "thin" over "thick" description. In the interest of comparison, contrast and coherence, a variety of festive forms have been studied with only a passing attention to the local context and relatively little appreciation of the internal structure of particular public rituals. This and the following chapter are intended to provide a corrective in this respect. As case studies of the major popular holiday events in Norwich and Coventry they will involve the scrutiny of two singular ritual forms in relation to their most immediate social, economic and political context.

In seeking to trace the development and to explore the social meaning of two festive events I have been made acutely aware both of the uncharted nature of this particular historiographical terrain and of the methodological problems which may have deterred such case studies in the past. Indeed history and historians have

been decidedly absent in this field. For while sociologists have sought to interpret such occasions as the coronation of the Queen Elizabeth II in 1952 and the funeral of President Kennedy in 1963 and anthropologists have examined such diverse subjects as cock fighting in Bali or the development of the modern olympics as spectacle, they have generally done so without regard to the changing historical context. Historians have proved uncharacteristically reticent about filling this gap.[1]

One of the few attempts to do so has been that of David Cannadine in relation to the transformation of the Colchester Oyster feast between 1820 and 1977. Perhaps the most important thing to emerge from this study was an appreciation of the limitations governing the rather fashionable interface between history and anthropology. Cannadine made a particular point about "thick description" - as practiced principally by Clifford Geertz - which he argued "can take the historian only so far in his analysis...[as] it cannot easily accomodate change." In a similar, if rather broader vein, Edward Thompson has warned about the "increasing tendency to abstract some anthropological or sociological finding from its context and flourish it around as if it was possessed of some intrinsic value as a typological fact about all human society." [2]

1. Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, pp 412-53.

2. D. Cannadine, "The transformation of civic ritual in modern Britain; the Colchester Oyster Feast," in Past and Present no 94 p 130; E.P. Thompson, "Anthropology and the discipline of historical context," in Midland History Vol 1, no 3, p 43.

Despite such dangers it would be foolish to ignore the benefits which have accrued from the progressively close relationship between history, anthropology and sociology, and parochial to assume that practitioners from these other fields are not aware of the limitations inherent in their approach or of the advantages to be gained from dialogue with different disciplines. There is currently a raging debate among social anthropologists, for example, about the need to incorporate a sense of historical change into their work.[3] Moreover historians can gain immeasurably from the synchronic depth and the social awareness of the best students in each of these areas. In this thesis the work of the sociologist Steven Lukes on political ritual, the Belgian folklorist Arthur Van Gennep on The Rites of Passage, and the social anthropologist Victor Turner on The Ritual Process have provided diverse but invaluable insights into the nature and the utility of popular celebration.[4]

In the hope of reaching a judicious balance between the desire to exploit illuminating concepts from other disciplines and the need to retain a sensitivity to historical context I propose to adopt a simple but, hopefully, an effective device. Each of these case studies will be divided into two parts. The first will concern the essential form and structure of the event at a relatively advanced stage in its historical

3. L.A. Strauss, "Anthropology's native problems. Revisionism in the field," in Harper's Magaine, May 1986 pp 49-57.

4. S. Lukes, Essays in Social Theory, pp 58-73; V. Turner, The Ritual Process; structure and anti-structure; A. Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage.

development. This will necessarily produce a fairly static picture of the occasion. To compensate for this the second part of the analyses will chart the development of each event in relation to the changes which affected the conduct and the reception of popular rejoicing and public ritual as a whole between the Restoration and Municipal Reform. Among other things this should provide a very practical illustration of the differing nature, pace and extent of the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures in Norwich and Coventry.

The Guild Day was the undisputed highlight of the popular and civic holiday calendar in Norwich during the late seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As an occasion for the inauguration of the Mayor it was second only to the Lord Mayor's Day in London. Indeed comparison with the latter was variously and often made. In the late 1690's, for example, Celia Fiennes noted that the "great many ceremonies (sic) in the choice and swearing of the Mayor" at Norwich, amounted to "in little what is done at the Lord Mayor of London's show", while on June 22nd 1784 Syllas Neville recorded in his diary that it was "Guild Day i.e. the same as the Lord Mayor's Day in London." In 1830 the Norwich Mercury expressed the opinion that "perhaps no place but London can vie with St Andrew's hall [the

location for the inaugural dinner] on the anniversary of the Guild." [5]

The preparations for the event were necessarily protracted. In the two weeks before the Guild the householders of the city took care to plaster and wash their houses, inside and out. The inhabitants of the street, and formerly the parish, in which the Mayor Elect lived took particular care in the decoration of their homes; Celia Fiennes wrote of how they "were very exact in beautifying themselves" and of the flags from their respective companies which they hung out the windows. Some fifty years later Benjamin Mackerell described how the street of the Elect was "made as handsome as could be...[with] green rushes...garlands...and streamers in abundance" and how the "houses were all covered with tapestry...[and] many curious pictures and cloths." The neighbours of the new Mayor continued to make special preparations for the Guild in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By that stage a particularly favourite custom was to erect a triumphal arch at the Elect's door or at the end of his street. [6]

By behaving in this way the neighbours of the Elect were expressing their particular pride in the choice of the Mayor, and in maximising the sense of his immediate community they were paving the way for his temporary elevation and departure to serve the city as a

5. C. Morris (ed), The Journeys of Celia Fiennes, p 148:
B. Cozens-Hardy (ed), The Diary of Syllas Neville, p 322:
N.M June 28 1830.
6. Morris, *Op Cit*, pp 147-8: B. Mackerell, *MSS History of
Norwich (N.N.R.O)*, p 730: N.M June 20 1795.

whole. As such they were participating in a rite of separation.

It is possible to interpret much of the activity on Guild Day in ritual terms. There were three central components of the celebration; the procession of the magistracy and the Livery, the inauguration of the Elect and the feast at St Andrew's hall. All can be seen as rites of passage; forms of activity established by custom and consent to facilitate the transition of the Elect from one state to another.

The first ritual of the day was the procession of the aldermen, and before 1732 of the company of St George, to the house of the Mayor Elect. From here they went to the house of the retiring Mayor where they took breakfast. At this point the separation of the Elect from his locality was complete and his incorporation into the wider polity had begun. That process continued when the expanded cavalcade travelled to the Cathedral for divine legitimation. On the way they stopped at the Guild Hall where they were met by the Common Council.[7]

At this point they were joined by the famous "Snap Dragon", the most distinctive of the many figures in the Guild. Originally Snap had represented the dragon slain by St George, but with the protestant Reformation and the reaction against Roman imagery the Saint and his Lady Margaret disappeared from the procession. This provided one very clear example of how "under protestantism...urban rituals, like religious rituals, tend to become progressively secularised, privatised and

monopolised by the magistracy." It was appropriate then that Snap, deprived of its associations with the legend of St George, became known as "the Mayor's Dragon." [8]

As such it became the major object of folk humour. Made out of basket or leather and covered with a painted cloth the dragon was "so contrived as to spread and clop its wings [and] to distend or contract its head." The introduction of a new model was the subject of great anticipation. In 1726, for example, the Norwich Gazette announced that "the old snap being dead, a young one is newly arrived here from Grand Cairo in Egypt or somewhere else, which will make its first appearance" at the forthcoming Guild. [9] On parade Snap was a figure of both fear and fun. In the 1730's Mackerell described how "the dragon...gave great diversion to the common people...[who] always seemed very much to fear it when it was near them, but always looked upon it with pleasure when it was any distance from them." [10]

As time progressed the popularity and the centrality of the dragon in the proceedings increased. By the 1830's Snap's dramatic exit from the New Hall in St Andrew's was, for many, the highlight of the proceedings. It was greeted by a crescendo of squeekers and a torrent of pennies which the wirepuller, operating the dragon, made valiant and interested attempts to catch. After the dissolution of the Guild in 1835 Snap lived on in the

8. M. James, "Ritual, drama and social body in the late medieval English town", in Past and Present, no 98, p 23;
R. Lane, "Snap the Dragon; The Lord Mayor's procession", in Norfolk Fair, Sept 1978, p 21.

9. Mackerell, Op Cit, p 731: Snap, the Norwich Dragon, Trend Litho, Norwich, 1976, p 7 (C&R N 352 007)

10. Mackerell, Op Cit, p 731.

mock Guild at Pockthorpe where he would rush around the streets and grab the hats off people's heads, returning them only if the owner paid half a penny.[11]

By the early nineteenth century Snap was at the head of the procession to the Cathedral. Behind and around him there were six men known as whifflers. Their major purpose was to control the huge crowds which gathered to see the cavalcade, in general, and the dragon, in particular. Dressed as Roman Gladiators, according to Mackerell, and in "old English costume" according to the later Hardy, they brandished and tossed their sharp swords to keep the spectators back. In a rather more decorative vein the dick fools also helped to clear the way; dressed "in painted canvass coats and ridiculous red and yellow cloth caps adorned with cats tails and small bells", they frolicked around the side of the procession and used their small wands to keep the crowd in order.[12]

Other components of the cavalcade to the Cathedral emphasised the civic nature of this highly popular event; the standard, the sword and the mace, in particular, represented the corporate power which the ceremony, as a whole, served to legitimate. The very act of parading around the principal streets of the city helped in this process; by doing so the Corporation was performing a terretorial rite of passage which engaged the attention of the people and ensured popular

11. C. Hardy, Memories of Norwich and its inhabitants fifty years ago, p 8: Snap, The Norwich Dragon, p 29.

12. J. Stacy, History of Norwich, p 99: Hardy, Op Cit, p 8: Mackerell, Op Cit, p 731.

invest the new civic head with the full powers of his office." [15]

Such a state necessarily engendered a degree of anxiety. This was reflected in the concern over the traditional oratory at the porch of the Free School, where the Cavalcade stopped on its final procession to the Guild Hall. While it is clear that the oratory was delivered by a senior or a favourite scholar it is uncertain who wrote it. It was this particular issue which worried the authorities, for it was only too easy for the orator to depart from the traditional formula of the speech and use the occasion for parody, satire and sectarianism. In 1707, for example, one of the orators between the Cathedral and the Guild Hall, delivered a subtle but well understood attack on Henry Crossgrove, the editor of the Mercury and a leading Tory councillor in the city. Asked for his response Crossgrove condemned it as " an abortive bastard piece of patch work" which, by virtue of its lack of verse, order and measure was almost certainly " the work of the boy who spoke it" and not of a " man in part" like the usher. [16]

It was no wonder then that the magistrates sought to censure, or at least restrict, the sentiments which could be expressed at this point. In 1723, for example, the Mayor's Court ordered that the Usher submit the proposed orations in advance of the Guild, while it seems that following the reform of the Guild in 1732 the oration was delivered only after the inauguration of the Elect was complete. Among the regulations laid down by

15. Borsay, Op Cit, p 239.

16. N.G, July 19th 1707.

the Mayor's Court for the running of the Free School in 1778, one order specifically charged the Head Master with the writing of the oratory for the Guild. As with the state of *communitas* discussed in the previous chapter, those with an interest in social structure and the maintenance of order were determined that liminal occasions, if they had to take place at all, should be surrounded with prescriptions, prohibitions and conditions.[17]

Following the dangers and the uncertainty of the oratory it must have been a relief to reach the Guild Hall. At this point the rites of transition which had characterised the proceedings so far, gave way to rites of incorporation; from hereon the Elect was quickly but carefully confirmed in office. Dressed in the robe of justice, the gold chain of office was placed around his neck and "the keys of the gates [were] delivered according to custom." After being sworn in the new Mayor made a formal and a formulaic speech of acceptance; his incorporation was complete and the rulers could relax once more.[18]

They did so at the feast in St Andrew's hall. While many popular holidays contained an element of commensality, the communal consumption of food and drink after the inauguration of a mayor was particularly important. It provided the first opportunity for the Mayor to demonstrate two characteristics, hospitality and

17. Edgar Breitenbach, "Guild Days in Norwich", *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, vol 29, no 1, Jan 1972, pp 8-10; Mackerell, *Op Cit*, p 744; Assembly Book (N.N.R.O Case 16 c. 10) 3 May 1778.

18. Mackerell, *Op Cit*, p 728.

civility, which were expected of office holders in the period before Municipal Reform. Furthermore, in an open corporation, where his rise or election to office, may have been opposed by other members of the ruling elite, it gave him a chance to set about healing political wounds and to rebuild his image as a statesman and a servant of the entire city. Finally it provided the ruling elite, from the county as well as the city, with an excuse to assemble, to talk, and to display their essential unity to those they governed.

The feast itself was a gastronomic and a social delight. Perhaps seven or eight hundred of "the principal persons of both sexes of the city and neighbourhood" enjoyed a menu which included "all kinds of good eatables...[such as] pasties, tarts, pickles, lobsters, salmon, sturgeon, hams, chickens, turkey, ducks and pidgeons in great plenty even to profusion." In addition each guest was presented with a bottle of wine and as much beer as he or she could drink. The highlight of the feast was the entry of a cooked swan or, later in the period, of a baron of beef. Its finale came when the court and the Livery rose - perhaps a little unsteadily - to escort the present and the former mayor to their respective homes.[19]

19. Cozens-Hardy, *Op Cit*, p 322; Mackerell, *Op Cit*, p 729-30; Hardy, *Op Cit*, p 8.

It is clear, then, that the Guild Day can be examined as a rite of passage, in which the Elect was transformed from a, more or less, ordinary man in the street into the chief magistrate who exercised political and judicial power over his fellow citizens who it was his duty to represent. As with the coronation of a king or, even, the graduation of a scholar, such a rite involved different and distinct stages; of separation, of transition, and of incorporation. As Arthur Van Gennep has shown, these too can be interpreted as rites within a grand and a persuasive anthropological scheme.

But this kind of approach can only take us so far. For while it explains, in some depth, what the Guild was, it does not tell us what happened to the event over a period of one hundred and seventy five years, and it is precisely with the question of "what happened" with which the historian is primarily concerned. To understand that it is necessary to revert largely, but not exclusively, to the concepts and methodologies developed by historians and, at the very least, to apply insights gained from other areas of study with the greatest possible attention to "the discipline of historical context." With that in mind let us now trace the physical development and the changing social meaning of the Norwich Guild.

Between 1660 and 1835 the Norwich Guild was the occasion for the inauguration of the city's Mayor. Originally, however, it had been established as a celebration for the feast of St George; founded at an inn

near Fye-bridge in 1408 by a company bearing his name, it was agreed " to furnish priests with capes, and [that] the George shall go in procession, and keep his estate" for two days on and about April 23rd in every year.

It was only in the sixteenth century that the Guild became the occasion for the inauguration of the Mayor and it was not until 1591 that the Mayor's Court changed the date of that event from April 23rd to the Tuesday before Midsummer's Day. It was performed annually at this time until 1835, except in those years when Midsummer fell on a Wednesday, in which case the ceremonies were observed on the Tuesday week preceeding. It continued for two days, although the major business of inaugurating the Mayor was dealt with on the first.[20]

Despite these changes responsibility for the organisation of the Guild remained with the Company of St George. This continued to be the case until 1732 when the fraternity was abolished. During these years the fortunes of the two were, therefore, inextricably linked and, in a very real sense, the history of the Guild and the story of the Company were one and the same thing.

Until the end of the seventeenth century both the institution and the event prospered. The Guild, itself, benefitted from the relatively relaxed social atmosphere which followed the Restoration, while the

20. Snap, The Norwich Dragon, pp 10, 23: J. Stacy, History of Norwich, p 98.

Company consolidated its already great influence in the festive life of the city.[21]

Much of that influence arose from its relationship with the Corporation; it had been this which had allowed it to survive the dissolution of the guilds and chantries in 1547. The exact nature of that relationship is difficult to understand. Perhaps because it was so complex it has tended to be oversimplified. Of those few historians who have studied it, most have represented the Company as merely the festive face of the Corporation. But this is misleading, for it implies both that the Fraternity was subordinate to the Council and that the membership of both were one and the same thing. This was not the case.

In fact, by the late seventeenth century, the Company was quite distinct, if not separate, from the Corporation. It is, therefore, necessary to look at the Fraternity in its own terms; to analyse its structure, organisational dynamics and development without undue reference to that of the Council and to do so without the comfort of analogies with modern or even contemporary institutions. For within the context of post-Restoration England the Company was, apparently, unique.

21. Apart from organising the Guild, the Company acted as the major supplier of regalia to the Corporation. In 1704, for example, the Fraternity presented a new blade and scabbard for the Mayor's sword and a gilt headed staff to the Beadle. They also commissioned Thomas Starling to do a painting of the Queen and her consort which they subsequently hung in the Guild Hall. They did these things "as a demonstration of the great honour and respect" they had for the aldermen and the Mayor and as a mark "of their duty and loyalty to the present majesty". Waste Books of the Company of St George (N.N.R.O case 17.b) Dec 18 1704, June 1705.

It was run on a day to day basis by an executive of twelve. These were appointed annually; four by the Mayor, four by the Elect and four by the Alderman of the Feast, the latter of whom supplied the plate for the inaugural dinner. Known as " the Twelve" their major responsibility was to organise the Guild and to ensure the preparation of the Feast.

Apart from the Twelve the main body of the Company was known as " the Livery". New members of this body were elected, for life, at the Common Council elections in each year. Once elected they were liable to " make the Feast"; something they would be appointed to do by the Twelve. Four feast makers were chosen each year and they were held responsible for the adequate performance of their task by the executive who would fine livery men who failed in this duty by withholding the rebate of £22 which was generally given after a successful feast. Apart from bearing the cost of the feast members of the Livery were also expected to pay an annual subscription known as the " Brother's Money."

Election to the Livery was meant to be an honour. In fact, by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, most inhabitants of Norwich viewed it, and the duties it involved, as a burden. Moreover the Company of St George itself was increasingly viewed with contempt. Its behaviour towards the citizens of Norwich was arrogant and overbearing, a point which Benjamin Mackerell illustrated well when he pointed to how on every evening from the Friday after May Day to the Friday

before the Guild the Twelve would assemble at the Guild Hall where

refreshed...with as much sack and sugar rolls as they pleased they [would send]...for the...chosen feastmakers and [ask]...them whether they intended to bear the charge of the feast which (they said) will cost you more than you think, by which they have so terrified some timorous wary people that they have been persuaded to buy it off.

In doing so they often spent as much as it would have cost anyway. Furthermore there was no guarantee that they would not be chosen in the following year.[22]

The growing unpopularity of the Company was evident in a concerted campaign against it from 1702 to 1706. This was organised by the freemen - of all the wards, but mainly those in the Ward Over-the-Water - who used their votes to prevent the election of the candidates approved by the Twelve. In doing so they were denying the Company the "most able sufficient freemen" it needed to continue and finance its tasks.

In reacting to this challenge the Twelve accused the "turbulent freemen" of seeking "the utter destruction...[and] subversion" of the Company. This was not something they were prepared to allow. In 1706, therefore, they instructed the relevant officers of the Fraternity and the Corporation to ignore the wishes of the electorate and summon their chosen candidates to be "read on" the Livery regardless. All of this they did in the interests of "preserving, supplying and supporting" the Company.[23]

22. Mackerell, *Op Cit*, p 730.

23. Waste Books, May 3 1706.

Whatever their motivation the actions of the Twelve in 1706 eliminated any claim the Company may previously of had to the support of the inhabitants of Norwich, generally, or the freemen, in particular. Purportedly established "to support the grandeur of...[the] city" and accountable to its electorate, the Company had, in fact, been shown to be nothing more than a dictatorial organisation run for its own ends.

Nevertheless, at least in the short term, the Twelve had achieved their objective of securing the Fraternity's future. For the next twenty five years they continued to choose candidates for the Livery who could add to the wealth of the Company by making the feast and paying the Brother's Money. Those who refused were fined or threatened with imprisonment.

Given such power it was hardly surprising that the Twelve - who were, after all, Corporation appointees - were occasionally tempted to use it against their enemies. This tendency was increased dramatically by the advent of the "rage of party" in 1710. Even before that, however, there were clear political undertones to the actions of the Company and its opponents. It was no accident that the campaign of the "turbulent freemen" began in 1702 or that the greatest opposition to the Company came from the Ward Over-the-Water. For while the former was the date on which the Tories took control of a previously "hung" council, the latter was the centre of Whig support in the city.

The freemen of Over-the-Water were clearly concerned that the Tories, who by virtue of their

victories on the Corporation were now in control of appointments to the Twelve, would use their new found power to punish them; to force them on to the Livery and then make them responsible for the feast. Not that the Tories were the only ones who used their dominance of the Company to such good effect; the Whigs, too, took advantage of the periods when they controlled the Corporation to exploit their influence in relation to the Twelve. Given such a bi-partisan approach to the affairs of the Fraternity it was no wonder that, in 1737, Benjamin Mackerell could recall the degree of anxiety at "every annual election of the Common Council...when the conquerors always put the vanquished on to the Livery." [24]

The sectarian abuse of the Company in these years diminished its status still further among the inhabitants of Norwich and led an increasing number of freemen to defy it. One such was William Clarke. His refusal to submit to the Fraternity initiated perhaps the greatest social drama in the city during the eighteenth century.

The first scene of that drama was played out immediately after Clarke's election as freemen's Sheriff in 1725 when Clarke was summoned before the Twelve who

ignoring him for some time...then instructed him that he was liable to read the Livery. He disputed this saying that, by virtue of being elected by the Court and not the freemen, he was not due. They said he was, but could not convince him. They [then] threatened him that he would be made feastmaker for the following year.

24. Mackerell, *Op Cit*, p 742.

Clarke responded to this threat with the skill and care which would characterise the whole of his campaign against this evidently malevolent fraternity. For while he agreed to be chosen as a feastmaker, he did so on the condition that his final decision, regarding whether to bear the cost of the feast or not, would be made at his leisure. Outraged by his cautious contempt the executive then threatened to have him thrown into Fleet prison and fined forty pounds.[25]

Clarke was by no means the first to oppose the Company's wishes. Since the late seventeenth century there had been several incidents of freemen either refusing to make the feast or pay the Brother's Money. He was unique, however, in the persistent nature of his defiance. For previous offenders had all, ultimately, submitted to the Fraternity's will. Clarke, on the other hand, refused to budge from his defiant stand.[26]

Initially this seemed to have paid off as the Twelve appeared to climb down. However in 1729 they returned to the fray. Two events of significance had taken place in the intervening years. The first was the triumph of the Tories in the Common Council and Mayoral

25. Ibid pp 734-8.

26. In the early eighteenth century there were at least two significant episodes of defiance. The first was that of a merchant called John Reeve. He initially refused to pay the cost of the feast and when the Company fined him forty pounds he threatened to take legal advice from counsel in London. In the end, however, he apparently agreed to pay. The second involved John Le Grys, attorney and alderman, who declined to pay the Brother's Money and threatened to commence legal proceedings against the Fraternity but according to Mackerell "he had not the courage to begin...[and] submitted...to what they demanded of him in a very short time." Waste Book May 3 1717, Jan 31, May 2 1718. Mackerell, Op Cit, pp 725-6.

elections of 1728. This meant that, for the first time since 1717, there was a Tory majority on the Twelve. The second was that Clarke had been elected as alderman for the Ward Over-the-Water, the Whig centre of opposition to the Company in 1702. The scene was thus set for a straight forward party political fight.

It was not long before it began. The Twelve made the first move when it once more called Clarke to the Livery. Again he refused to go on. The Company responded by changing the rules for admission to the feast. Now only those aldermen who had been elected to the Livery would be invited; Clarke was the only one who had not.

Clarke was saved further embarrassment by the victory of his own party in the elections of the following year. But even if the Tories had retained control it is unclear whether they could have forced him to submit to the Company's will. For the authority of the Fraternity was now questioned by many in the city. The situation was so bad that in December 1729 the Twelve had to ask the Mayor to issue warrants against twenty one people in arrears of the Brother's Money or who had refused to pay fines that the Company had imposed. [27]

It was not long before the Twelve realised how far their influence had declined. In an attempt to restore it they

appointed a committee to inspect [the] books and papers...relating to St George's company...and to advise with the Recorder and Steward...[as to] what method is most proper...to counsel persons to be read on the

Livery, to make the feasts or to pay the Brothers' Money or to perform any of the orders relating to the said company.[28]

The comprehensive brief of the committee was a measure of how ineffective the Fraternity had become.

William Clarke had also developed an interest in the archives of the Company at this time. His perusal of their records along with the charters and minutes of the Corporation led him to announce " that any power or authority due to St George's company disappeared with the Act dissolving all guilds and fraternities in the first year of the reign of King Edward VI." As a result the Corporation agreed to set up a committee of six aldermen and six common council men to investigate the matter of the Company's authority and to find ways of having it properly regulated. The Company was found wanting in every respect. Able only to plead the legitimization of custom and practice, their case collapsed, leaving Clarke in total control of their fate.

Asked what he would do with the Fraternity, Clarke did not hesitate to suggest its abolition. But, he was asked, what of the Guild ? To that Clarke had an answer; he suggested that the Corporation should take over the responsibility for organising it, and that it should be paid for by the Mayor who, in mitigation of his increased costs, could be released from the expense of the traditional civic feasts in May and August.[29]

In the event no decision about the future of the event or the body which had organised it for so long

28. Ibid Sept 15, 1730.

29. Mackerell, Op Cit, p 740.

was made and the authority of the Company was left to decline. In 1731 the four livery men chosen to make the feast refused to do so and ignored the fine of forty pounds imposed upon them as a result. The Guild of that year was a sorry and a poignant affair. While the Mayor Elect entertained the Court of Aldermen at his own expense, the Company of St George retired to an inn. The wheel had turned full circle, and they were back in the position of 1408.[30]

It was not long before the Fraternity agreed to wind up its affairs. On June 11th 1731 a committee was appointed to prepare for the sale of the Company's goods and on the 21st of September the Waste Book recorded that this

day the Company do agree that the Mayor, sheriffs, citizens and commonalty of the city and the county of Norwich do take into their custody and for their own use and benefit all the goods and chattels belonging to this Company.

In return the Corporation agreed to pay the debts which the Company had accumulated in its last desperate years.

The history of the Company of St George and of the Guild with which it was so closely associated in the early eighteenth century illustrates two features of rejoicing and ritual at Norwich in these years. The first was its highly political nature. We have already seen how the holiday calendar was exploited during the rage of party in the late 1720's. It seems that the Guild was

30. Waste Book May 28 1731: N.M June 26 1731.

subject to these pressures many years before, perhaps as early as 1702. The second concerns the changing institutional framework of public festivity in the eighteenth century. The story of the Guild in this respect was an exaggerated version of the developments outlined in chapter three; born of a medieval community the Company became an anachronism as that society broke down and, in the end, responsibility for organising the event passed to the Corporation, an institution which more clearly fit the circumstances of the times.

111

In the years which followed the dissolution of the Company of St George it seems that the Guild Day celebrations lost much of their popular appeal. While the basic ritual forms and processional routes remained much the same and the feast continued to be held at the New Hall, one cannot avoid the impression that, on the whole, the Norwich Guild became a rather pedestrian affair, comparable to the mayoral inaugurations in other large provincial towns rather than to the Lord Mayor's Day in London. The decline of the Guild as a popular holiday was reflected and consolidated by the absence of Snap; neither Mackerell, in his account of the Guild after

1732, or Blomefield, in his description of the event in 1737, mention the dragon at all.[31]

By the mid 1740's the Guild had become a rather minor event on the local holiday calendar and in 1745 it was quietly dropped altogether. For the next seven years there was no popular rejoicing to mark the inauguration of the Mayor. It was not until 1753 that the Mercury was able to announce that

we hear the Guild in this city, which has been dropt (sic) for many years will...be revived with all its ancient splendour and magnificence. The churches are adorn'd with streamers and the streets decorated with flags and colours and the inhabitants are making great preparations to invite the country to the NORWICH GUILD.[32]

On the day of the inauguration the civic body proceeded as of old and " amongst the populace joy was conspicuous in every face." The traditional concentration on the street of the Elect was also revived and the Mercury noted that his neighbours

demonstrated (by the number of garlands, streamers, pictures, tapestries, bowers and other ornaments with which they decorated their houses) how much they were satisfied with the citizens' choice of the present Mayor.

Elsewhere in the city " the ancient ornaments of former guilds were revived with fresh lustre...and the inhabitants...kept open house and genteely entertained

31. Ibid p 743: F. Blomefield, An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk, p 447.
32. N.M June 9 1753.

their friends." The festivities continued on the following day.[33]

Although there is no evidence of any specific reason for the revival of the Guild in 1753 it is likely that the general improvement in the city's economy (this was the high point of Norwich's " golden age") and the choice of a particularly wealthy mayor had a great deal to do with the event's rebirth. There may also have been a feeling that the lack of the festivities on the inauguration of recent mayors was a bad reflection on the city as a whole. This was apparent in the poetry of one of the speech boys which, unusually, was printed in the local press. Regretting the shameful neglect of the past few years, the orator went on to compare the decline of Norwich with that of Rome. He argued that in both cases the violation of traditional rites had played an important part in the process. More specifically he suggested that party strife, industrial disputes, and the emergence of Methodism, all features of that time in the city, resulted directly from the absence of the Guild. With its revival there was new hope, and the reappearance of Snap only added to the general euphoria.[34]

Of course much of this was hyperbole on a grand scale. But it does point to the continuing relationship in the popular mind between the health and the vigour of public ritual and the prosperity and peace of an entire community. Revived, the Guild was a vibrant, an integral, and a reassuring aspect of the city's life.

33. N.M June 23 1753.

34. N.M June 30 1753.

A further reason for the re-emergence of the Guild as a major popular and civic holiday may have been the progressive consolidation of the Junto as the dominant force within the Corporation; as an increasingly stable and self confident elite they, like the rulers of the nation-state after 1788, sought to exploit the festive medium to project their power to those they ruled. This certainly seems to have been the case on the two occasions for the inauguration of Jeremiah Ives, one of the leading members of the Junto in Norwich.

Ives was elected for the first time in 1769. Apart from the traditional decoration of the houses in his street, a grand triumphal arch was erected at the church of St Clements where he was a parishioner. After the usual proceedings, the "numerous and polite" company who attended the feast went on in the evening to an assembly at Chapel Field house. This was a new addition to the festive fare and served to emphasise the comparative unity of the ruling elite at this time. Such a sensible and sensitive gathering would not have been possible in the midst of the partisan strife which had characterised the political life of the city during the earlier years of the century.[35]

In the quarter of a century which followed the first election of Jeremiah Ives the Norwich Guild became even more elaborate. His election for a second time in 1795 provoked perhaps the most extensive of all the celebrations of the mayoral inauguration at Norwich. By this stage an old debate about whether to walk or ride in

35. N.M June 24 1769.

the procession had been resolved by technological progress; the development of the carriage provided a vehicle which was both safe and impressive. In 1795 there were twenty carriages in the procession to the Cathedral. But if the carriages were a comparatively new feature of the celebrations, the other components of the Guild were calculated to arouse traditional feelings and attitudes towards the ruling elite, in particular, and the community, in general. After divine service the cavalcade proceeded, via the sanitised oration at the Free School, to the New Hall where the feast "was plentiful and elegant and attended by a numerous and genteel company...including many of the first families in the county" who, by this stage, had replaced the company of St George, as the occupants of the dais.[36]

Parson Woodforde was one of the "vast number" who came to Norwich for the Guild on this occasion. He made a particular point of noting that

some of the old time doing [was] exhibited today such as [Alderman Ives] did the last time of being mayor - A fine and curious triumphal arch of green box intersped with many flowers and variegated lamps hung in the centre of the arch at...[his] house, and by St Clement's church near Fye-bridge...[and] at the Mayor's door there was a similar arch with three golden crowns in it, and the Prince of Wales's feather in the middle.[37]

In what was all too apparently a glorification of the status quo, Ives took great care to involve as many in the community as possible. There was, for example, a

36. N.M June 20 1795: Hardy, *Op Cit*, p 8.

37. J. Beresford (ed), Diary of a Country Parson, June 16 1795, p 493.

spread of the traditionally excessive rejoicing in the Elect's street to the whole of his parish. Ives encouraged this process by providing the inhabitants and the Sunday scholars therein with "a very handsome dinner" at the Bull and the Anchor respectively. He also provided "a very liberal allowance...for the prisoners in the city jail and the Bridewell...[and gave] the poor freemen in Conisford ward", of which he was alderman, a shilling each. By doing so he emphasised the reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled and mobilised the bias of the inhabitants in the establishment's favour.[38]

The last point was particularly important in the context of the political and economic discontent which characterised life in Norwich during the early years of the French Revolution. One immediate consequence of the Revolution and the Napoleonic War which followed was to strengthen the hand of the local and national state in respect of the festive medium. This was as true of the Guild as of any other component of the holiday calendar in Norwich and until the end of the eighteenth century the celebrations remained as an elaborate testimony to the undisputed role of popular rejoicing and ritual in the political life of Norwich, in particular, and the nation, in general.

However, at least locally, that position began to change in the early years of the nineteenth century as the consensus among the ruling class about the desirability of public festivity, particularly, and over

issues of culture and politics, generally, broke down. One of the results of that process was the end of the Norwich Guild.

But one should not judge any process purely by its final results; such a teleological approach has done profound damage to the understanding of the subtleties and the contradictions within pre-industrial and pre-Reform society. In fact, the road to dissolution of the Guild was not a straight one; along the way there were numerous diversions and very little sense of ultimate direction even among those who, in the end, approved most heartily of the path they had followed.

Until the very eve of Reform the Guild continued to enjoy the support, and even the enthusiasm, of the majority of the inhabitants of Norwich. This was true of rulers and ruled, of rich and poor. The economic value of the Guild and the civic glory it produced, acted as the main guarantors for its future. In 1805 the Norwich Mercury announced that,

we are happy to learn that the Mayor Elect intends to give the customary entertainment at St Andrew's hall; which while it sustains the dignity of the magistracy contributes so much to enliven the internal commerce of the city.[39]

The evident enthusiasm of the press was matched by the continuing patronage of the magistracy. In 1810, for example, the Guild "was observed with a degree of splendour and munificent hospitality not exceeded by any late preceeding year." The procession to the Cathedral

involved nearly all the aldermen, up to fifty of the common council and two bands, as well as the sheriffs, the Mayor and the Elect. After divine service they went to the Free School porch where the oration was "very audibly delivered by the senior scholar." They then proceeded to the inauguration at the hall where it was significant that the previous Mayor was congratulated for his "public munificence, liberality and hospitality."

In this period these were considered essential qualities for a good civic leader and the Guild provided a medium for the new Mayor to impress his peers. the "elegant dinner...[was attended by] 700 persons of the first distinction in the city and county" and elaborated by the presence of some choristers from the Cathedral and a band of music who combined to perform God Save the King and the Coronation Anthem by Handel. Like Jeremiah Ives before him, John Steward chose to extend his hospitality to the prisoners in the Bridewell to whom he gave a guinea " and a plentiful basket from the hall." [40]

Of course the Guild had never been a purely civic affair. Shows and exhibitions had always taken advantage of the thousands who flocked to the Guild from a distance of up to two hundred miles in the 1730's and probably a lot further with the introduction of the canal and the turnpike. The commercial potential of the crowds was not lost on those who stood to gain by their presence; the Ranelagh gardens, for example advertised a concert and a firework display at the eminently

accessible fee of one shilling. Even in a poor year they could expect to attract a thousand people.[41]

Despite the apparent vigour and utility of the Guild at this time, the event was about to experience a period of temporary decline. Between about 1811 and 1819 the Guild attracted less attention and fewer resources than at any time since the disappearance of the inaugural festivities in the late 1740's and early 1750's. In 1817 the traditionally valued Ladies were excluded from a feast for only three hundred men, while in 1819 the ceremonies of the day were confined to the swearing in at the hall; there was no feast and the Corporation did not even attend divine service. Neither the Steward nor the Recorder bothered to attend and the rites of office had to be administered by the Town Clerk.

The paucity of the proceedings on this occasion provoked the Mercury to

reprobate in the strongest terms the discontinuance (now become so general) of those solemn and salutary formalities and the hospitable customs, which while they sustain the character and dignity of the Magistrate himself, have been always considered as beneficial to the trade of the city.

The paper further considered that, as a result of this "loss of public spirit", those from outside the city "would be apt to consider that we are sunk from opulence or lacking in self respect." Moreover the frequent dereliction of duty in this area would mean that those without the wealth, the prestige, or the social standing

41. Mackerell, *Op Cit*, pp 730-1: N.M June 16 1810, June 26 1819.

traditional to the office holders of Norwich, would now be encouraged to stand. As a counter to such an undesirable prospect the paper suggested that the freemen should make the performance of the Guild a pre-requisite to power. It seems then that attitudes had not changed so very much from the days of the Company of St George; it is likely that the executive of that body would have expressed a similar opinion.[42]

As in the late 1740's and early 1750's there was no articulated reason for the decline of the Guild. However once again the impoverished state of Norwich can be assumed to have had some effect in depressing the event. Moreover there also seems to have been a political dimension to the lack luster performance of the Guild in the 1810's. That the Whigs were in control of the Corporation at precisely the same time as the Guild was in the wane was more than just coincidence. Because of their previous experience at the hands of the Tory revellers during the rage of party in the early eighteenth century, the Whigs, in general, were potentially more hostile to, or at least wary of, the festive medium. As a result they were ambivalent towards even the most respectable of public rituals; for while they could understand their utility, they were also, only too painfully, aware of its potential for disorder and immorality. Even the Guild needed regulation; since the early eighteenth century there had been regular orders about transport to the hall and those who could and could not attend the feast.[43]

42. N.M June 21 1817, June 26 1819.

43. N.G June 7 1707: N.M June 12 1725.

The idea that there was a political reason for the decline of the Guild in the late 1810's is given further credence by the remarks of the Steward of the traditionally Tory Bell and Castle Corporation in 1819. Addressing the newly elected officers of the club he promised that he had "not forgotten the time when those high in power in this city would have checked rather than encouraged any public expression of joy, loyalty or gratitude ...[for the] glorious progress of the British and Allied Arms on the continent of Europe." There can be little doubt that he was referring to the Whigs.[44]

But the most conclusive evidence of an emerging political divide over the performance of the Guild is the fact that it was the victory of the Tories at the common council and mayoral elections of 1820 which precipitated its revival. Despite the recent unwillingness of the party it supported to patronise the Guild the Whig Mercury greeted the second renaissance of this event in less than a century "with great pleasure, as beneficial to the city at large, as well as honourable to the hospitality of the magisterial office." The attitude of the Mercury on this occasion acts as a warning not to overemphasise the extent of the political division over the Guild at this stage, but it clearly did exist and, eventually, it would grow.

The preparations for the revival of the Guild in 1820 included the construction of a new avenue in the garden of St Andrew's hall to ease access to the feast. On the day itself the various processions included a

44. N.M Jan 30 1819.

number of new carriages - by now a symbol of relative prestige - introduced by the Elect and some of the other aldermen. Up to 600 attended the feast in the evening; double the number of diners in the previous year.[45]

In the next few years the Guild recovered a good part of its former glory. In 1821 the Mercury commented that "except in the metropolis, there is perhaps no city where the day of inaugurating...[the] chief magistrate is crowned with so much pomp and circumstance." The election of Mr Hawkes, a major manufacturer, in the following year, generated a particularly fine Guild. On the preceeding night a company of his workmen serenaded the Elect and his wife, while on the day and the evening of the Guild, the two triumphal arches which had been erected in the street of the Elect acted as stands for a band of wind instruments and a group of hand bell ringers. "Over 700 ladies and gentlemen were at the feast in the evening."

After Hawkes's inauguration the Recorder made some revealing remarks about the relative extent and the preceived purpose of the Guild Day celebrations. Although "much of the splendour and pageantry...[had gone] enough still remained to make apparent the wisdom and policy of our forefathers"; the procession from the house to the hall had been intended as a demonstration of respect to the Elect and his predecessor, while their insistence on attending the Cathedral showed their perspicacity in making "religion the preliminary step to the imposing ceremony of the day."

45. N.M June 7, June 24, 1820.

The Guild of 1822 also provided the first reports of the mock mayor making ceremony at Fye-bridge and Pockthorpe. The inauguration of the Fye-bridge mayor recalled the original location of the Guild of St George in the fifteenth century. By the early nineteenth century it was organised by the fishmongers, one of whom was chosen as the Elect and paraded through the market in a boat before he addressed the people. His speech was a parody of the official inaugural address, " in which he complains of imaginary evils and undertakes to redress all such grievances in the scale of fish, with other jocularities of a similar kind." In 1822 the Mayor was then tossed out of the boat. As a result he " received some unlucky concussions on a part, which... from his embarking upon such a voyage" the Mercury conjectured "was meagre." [46]

That year there was also a rather more elaborate affair at Pockthorpe, a hamlet just outside of the city. The Pockthorpe Guild, like that at Costessy, was conceived as a mockery of the Mayor-making at Norwich. Held on the same day, the Griffin public house acted as the court room, and the streets and inns were decorated with flags and tapestries. The chosen candidate was paraded through the streets with

a band, flags, an excellent imitation of old Snap, a champion bearing the sword of Truth, an axe of Justice supported by two blacks in

46. N.M June 23 1821, June 22 1822: Snap, The Norwich Dragon, p 28. The mocking style of the Fye-bridge Mayor's speech of acceptance was again evident in 1838 when that year's choice said " he would endeavour to remove the duty off tea and sugar." This was received with great cheers.

Indian costume, mace bearers, [and] a sword bearer.

The Mayor himself was "arrayed in a scarlet camblet coat with a powdered bush wig" and his train was born by "two children, in fancy dress, followed by two past Mayors in scarlet camblet and a club of merry makers, two by two." The only interference with the proceedings came from the Elect's wife who, it was believed, "did not wish [her husband] to enjoy his blushing honours." However a replacement was quickly found and the day concluded with a pudding and beef dinner at the Griffin."^[47]

The meaning of such mockery has already been discussed in relation to the Bell and Castle Corporation at Norwich in chapter three. In the course of the present enquiry the significance of the Mayor-making at Pockthorpe lies in the indication it provides of the continuing and strong relationship between popular rejoicing and official ritual. Moreover the emergence (or re-emergence) of the Pockthorpe Guild in the 1820's is a tribute to the vitality of plebeian culture in these years.

That vitality provided the real Guild with an important boost in the 1820's and in the early 1830's. The election of John Patteson, a local brewer, in 1823 helped to consolidate the popularity of the occasion, while his presentation of a sheep to his employees in Pockthorpe ensured that even that arena of social and political satire was brought within the control of the establishment. The particularly high regard in which

47. N.M June 22 1822.

Patteson was held even brought a note of respectful sobriety to the revellers at Fye-bridge where the Mayor, recalling his accident in the previous year, advised his successor " to stint his potations of Patteson's nog".[48]

The last really great Guild of the 1820's was in 1826. Following the excitement of the general election it was " amongst the most splendid celebrations...ever witnessed upon a similar occasion." A notable visitor to Guild was Sir Robert Peel who, in Walpolian style, " came down in grateful respect for the return of his brother." The Mercury recorded the procession to the Cathedral, the latin oration, the inauguration and the feast with great satisfaction, concluding that these " sights and ceremonies at once exhilarating raise the minds of the actors and spectators, whilst they honour the donor and benefit the place [in which] they occur." [49]

The benevolent attitude of the Mercury was representative of that held by most people in Norwich at this time. Furthermore, given its role as a propagator of Whig opinions, it would have been a particularly sensitive indicator of any changes in feeling towards the Guild. For now it was happy to laud the economic benefits and the social advantages of the event. In 1830, for example, it echoed the concern of many that the proposed cancellation of the Guild on account of the King's perilous state of health would accentuate the difficulties of the city's economy. In the event their fears proved groundless and the Guild went ahead, rather

48. N.M June 21 1823.

49. N.M June 24 1826.

later than usual, but normal in every other respect. The procession to the Cathedral included "the once formidable Snap and the still formidable whifflers", while, for those excluded from the feast, a special illumination was organised in the public gardens. Once again the Mercury was inspired to compare the event with the Lord Mayor's Day in London and to comment that no day could have passed off "more free from the disputes or accidents which sometimes disturb such popular celebrations." In 1831 the Guild was equally successful and despite the initial reluctance of John Harrison Yallup to serve as mayor for a second time, the feast was the largest yet with a guest list of nearly 1100.

Despite such apparent enthusiasm for the Guild, it is clear that things were beginning to change and the consensus which had surrounded the event until now was about to break down. The first discordant note was struck by the Mercury when, in a rapid change of mood, it commented on "the mob who always attend" on the Corporation's entry to the Cathedral. Habitually boisterous their behaviour in 1831 was "worse than we ever remember [with] shouting and other indecent behaviour quite unbecoming the approach to the house of God on this solemn occasion." There are echoes here of the virulent reaction to the activities of the congregation at the memorial for the Duke of York, five years before.[50]

It was not, however, until 1833 that a clear divergence of opinion between the Whigs and the Tories in

50. N.M June 28 1830, June 25 1831.

relation to the Guild became apparent. In the aftermath of parliamentary reform, the election of a Tory mayor was bound to quicken the pace in this respect. The choice of Samuel Bignold, the self proclaimed leader of the Conservative party in the city, was particularly provocative. An "interest far more than common...attended his accession to office"; carriages amassed in the streets, people crowded the pavements and St Stephen's, known as Guild Street for the day, was "chok'd with the multitude". Once again there were about 1,100 at the feast.

The Tories were clearly intent on using the Guild as a means to increase their popularity in the city. Within that context the feast became an arena for anti-Reform sentiment; the honorary freeman, Sir James Scarlett, repaid his debt to his hosts with a toast to the "perpetuity of the city of Norwich." Rather banal of itself, within the raging debate over Reform, his words took on an explosive significance. The Mercury rebuked him in the strongest possible terms. But it still felt unable to attack the Guild as a whole; it was too popular a part of the civic life of the city. Instead it resorted to carping at the decorations in the street of the Elect; admittedly they were good, but they were nowhere near "the manner and...the degree of ancient pageantry." [51]

Despite the restraint of the Mercury on this occasion, the writing was clearly on the wall for the Guild. In the following year the paper could only note

51. N.M June 22 1833.

with wary disbelief that " the inhabitants...return to their celebrations" with their appetite renewed and while it recognised the appeal of the Guild both to the "higher" and the "humbler" classes it did so without the commendation of its economic and civic utility which had characterized its reports of less than a decade before. For their part the Tories once again made use of the feast as an occasion for anti-Reform propaganda.[52]

The scene was thus set for the final showdown over the Guild. The willingness of the Tories to invoke it in their opposition to Reform, provoked the Whigs to disown it. As a result the Guild Day, in general, and Snap, in particular, became the chief symbolic battleground over which the struggle for and against Reform took place. For those who supported the proposed change the figure of Snap, for long considered a pathetic representation of the original dragon, provided the easiest meat. Accordingly the Mercury completed its call for a complete reform of the Corporation with the warning that

we must even consent to part with Snap himself (though as like the Great Dragon as a mayor to the mailed champion of this country) the whifflers must become his " comates in exile" and the Guild Day sink among things forgotten.

The paper continued by agreeing " to go the whole length of the dragon in the heroical poem of John Wilkes" who "the corporation worshipful he valued not an ace/ but

swallowed the Mayor, asleep in his chair/ and pick'd his teeth with the mace."[53]

Those opposed to Reform also found the dragon to be a potent symbol; although for them it was a positive and resonant representation of the paternalism and the joy which characterised the old society. Both before and after the Bill for the reform of the Corporations was finally carried they issued propaganda sheets entitled "Snap Redivivus" or "Snap Metamorphosed" in which they used the image and the associations of this most popular of English dragons to attack the supporters of Reform. One of the most common devices was to use an image of Snap incarcerated or restricted in some intolerable fashion. In "Snap Redivivus, or a slap at the Whigs" number fifteen the dragon was portrayed as having escaped from his prison and determined upon a midnight visit to one of the great reformers in the city. Having reached his destination he chastised "the startled wight";

and now I'm here I'll make you rue/ well may you shake and look so blue/ what have you done you paltry thing/ where are the sports that Guild Day bring/ that made so many joyous sing.[54]

However even such eloquent and evocative propaganda could not turn back the tide of Reform. By the time of the Guild in 1835 the champions of the old society knew their cause was lost. Indeed the last Norwich Guild was

53. N.M April 18 1835.

54. "Snap Redivivus; or a slap at the Whigs" no 15, June 11 1836: "Old More's Iron-Glyphics or Snap Metamorphosed" No 1, 1835.

something of a wake for the ancien regime; an appropriate atmosphere for the mournful speeches at the feast. The Recorder defended Snap and the whifflers as harmless amusements; the survival of similar figures at the inauguration of the Mayor in the corporation of London (which had been specifically excluded from the provisions of the Reform Act) merely added to the sense of injustice among the Tories of Norwich.

Appropriately the last word was left to John Harvey; a local figure with whom we are already familiar as the sponsor of the water frolic at Thorpe and the spirit behind the campaign to revive horse racing in Norwich during the 1820's. Recalling that he had attended fifty guilds, he defended the event as a display of hospitality, an encouragement to trade and an occasion for conviviality which, although "not pleasing to some...never was an evil". He concluded by remembering that the "Guild was to the poor as well as to the rich, a means of pleasure and gratification." [55]

Civic virtue, economic benefit, social value; these were traditional arguments in favour of the Guild. But they had lost their strength. With the passage of the Reform Act the Guild was abolished without any significant popular protest. It could have survived; the post-Reform prosperity of the Preston Guild, for example, shows that there was still a place for such displays in some English communities after 1835. However the comprehensive triumph of the Reformers at Norwich, the extent of the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures

55. N.M June 20 1835.

in the city, and the identification of the event with the ancien regime secured its fate. In the end the Guild, and those who supported it, lay as vanquished as the dragon at whom they had laughed.

IV

The Guild Day was, then, one of the major mediums in which the struggle over Reform at Norwich was fought out. Such a role was nothing new to the event; it had been exploited for political purposes many times during the previous century. What was new was the degree and the extent of the opposition to the occasion at this time. This had increased considerably in the 1820's and 1830's and reflected the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures which had come to fruition in these years.

Of course this cultural change had not happened over night. The advance of the middling orders, the polarisation of political life and the decline of the textile industry which accompanied and motivated it had each been in progress for a century or more. Nevertheless it is surprising how late in our period the attack upon the Guild came. It was only really after 1832 that the enemies of the event spoke out; beforehand opposition to the occasion (from the Whigs in the 1810's, for example) was manifested as indifference rather than active hostility. Those who did oppose the Guild at this stage hoped that, aided by their withdrawal, it would die of

its own accord. The fact that it did not is an indication of how valuable it was generally considered to be, not just as a commercial attraction but also as a reflection of the city's standing in the nation at large. All in all the history of the Norwich Guild should act as a check on those who would assume too much too early about the decline of rejoicing and ritual, even in the most hostile of social settings.

Chapter Ten.

The Godiva Procession in Coventry 1678-cl850.

The subject of my second case study is the cavalcade which opened the Trinity fair at Coventry. With the introduction of the figure of Lady Godiva in 1678, this became known as the Godiva Procession, or Show Fair, and was soon established as the highlight of the city's holiday calendar. Although it lacked the ritual variety and depth of the Guild Day in Norwich, the Godiva procession was rich in social meaning and acted as a fertile source for "the invention of tradition" and the proliferation of plebeian humour. As such it will provide a further insight into the nature of popular culture in the period with which this thesis is concerned, although the need to adopt rather different chronological parameters serves as a reminder of the dangers of a too rigid periodisation in this respect.

In the following analysis I intend to take the same approach as that adopted for the Norwich Guild. There will be two separate, but not exclusive sections; one will deal with the elements of continuity in the celebration of this holiday, while the other will explore the nature, the pace and the extent of the development in and the changing attitudes towards this unique event. Let us now turn to the first of these two parts which will explore the basic form, structure and social meaning of

the Procession as it had developed by the late eighteenth century.

It is not possible to interpret the Godiva Procession in the same highly ritualised terms used for the analysis of the Norwich Guild. While the Procession can be seen as a territorial rite of passage which was necessary both to open the fair and, in many people's eyes, to maintain the charter of the city, there is little further potential for adopting a ritual schema of the kind used for the inauguration of the Mayor at Norwich. One of the chief jobs of the historian, no matter how optimistic about the relationship between his discipline and social anthropology, is to recognise the constraints of the evidence.[1]

Instead the search for interpretative "depth" and a "thick" rather than a "thin" description has to focus on the form and the social meaning of the figures and symbols which made up the Procession. It will then be possible to see the Procession in the context of its performance.

Above all the Godiva Procession was a pageant; a story, to paraphrase Clifford Geertz, which the

1. Even the notion that the Procession was necessary to secure the Charter was challenged by contemporaries. William Reader called it an "erroneous opinion", although he did admit that it was one "entertained by many persons." Writing in 1826 he opined that the Procession was "altogether a voluntary act on the part of the inhabitants, and accordingly its intervals of exhibition are irregular and uncertain, depending altogether on the inclinations of the magistrates and citizens." This was certainly true later in the period, particularly after Municipal Reform. However during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century it had been rigorously and annually performed. See Reader, Lady Godiva pamphlet (C&WC JN 398.2)

Coventrians told about themselves, past and present. That such a form could dominate the local festive culture is hardly surprising; the location for one of the greatest sets of medieval mystery plays, Coventry had a rich tradition in this respect. One occasion for the performance of those plays had been the feast of Corpus Christi. This was precisely the point of the Godiva Procession on the post-medieval calendar.[2]

The Cavalcade was headed by St George and twelve knights in armour. While the latter were strictly decorative and an anachronistic reference to a more war like past, the figure of St George was rich in contemporary meaning. The patron saint of England, his appearance in a Procession at Coventry had a particular resonance for the local people: The Seven Champions of Christendom, a widely read book in the eighteenth century, stated that he was born and had died in the city.[3]

Behind him came the figure of Lady Godiva, the central symbol of the Cavalcade. Almost all Coventrians were aware of the Godiva legend; of her plea to Leofric to lift the taxes on the sorry city of Coventry, of his refusal as beneficiary and Earl of Mercia to do so, of her continual petitions and of the eventual challenge issued by a pestered Leofric for his wife to ride through the streets of the city "naked in the eyes of the people". Her agreement to do so was only made slightly less remarkable by her cunning instruction to her

2. C. Geertz, The Interpretation of Culture, p 448. The feast of Corpus Christi is on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday.

3. Reader, Op Cit, p 19.

servants to ride on ahead and order the people of the city to remain in doors and not to look.[4]

As a symbol, the figure of Godiva had many layers of meaning. To the people of Coventry she represented courage, virtue and a refusal to bow to oppression. In the past her name had been frequently invoked in campaigns against various attempts to deprive the city or the citizens of their rights. In 1495, for example, she was the central character in a poem pinned to the doors of St Michael's church which protested against the introduction of taxes on wool and drapery, the interference with the customs surrounding apprenticeship and the recent restriction upon popular participation in riding the Lammas. One historian has even gone so far as to suggest that the installation of Godiva in the Procession to open the Trinity fair in 1678, may have been an attempt to mobilise the citizens against the interference by the later Stuarts in the autonomy of the Coventry Council. While this is an interesting idea, it is unsupported by the evidence.[5]

Lady Godiva could also be seen as "the woman on top"; determined and manipulative she had proved the better of Leofric, in particular, and of men, in general. As Natalie Zemon Davies has shown, in the carnivalesque milieu of "the world turned upside down" the topo of "the woman on top" was one of the most enjoyed. In the English context the vigorous virago appeared in Mumming at Christmas, doling on Plough Monday and in "goose dancing" at Easter as well as an indeterminate number of

4. See J. Lancaster, *Godiva of Coventry*, pp 43-7.

5. Diana Bolton in *V.C.H. (Warwks)* Vol VIII p 219.

other more local festive forms. At Coventry such role reversal was apparent in the traditional lifting on Hock Tuesday in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and possibly the later seventeenth centuries, while at Norwich William Arderon reported that "men dressed as women" visited houses for money on Plough Monday.[6]

The "woman on top" itself was open to a variety of interpretations. In the context of a charivari, or a Skimmington, for example, the domineering or licentious wife was viewed with a mixture of admiration and outrage, for while as a shrew she could be roundly condemned, her ability to dominate and manipulate her husband was indicative of an extraordinary inner strength. Similarly in the legend of Godiva, her constant pleading for the case of Coventry could be interpreted as righteous determination or wilful nagging.

But what of the potential of such a powerful and flexible image? According to Davies this too could be multivalent. At one level the concept of the "woman on top" (along with any other category from "the world turned upside down") merely provided an outlet "for conflict about authority within the system" and acted as a means whereby "authoritarian currents within the family" and society as a whole, "could be moderated by laughter and paradoxical play" of a kind which, ultimately served to re-enforce the status quo.[7]

At another level, however, Davies has argued that inversions, like the "woman on top", experienced in

6. Natalie Zemon Davies, Society and Culture in Early Modern France, pp 129, 138-40: Arderon Manuscripts, "Particular Customs in Norwich" (C&R N 728.5)

7. Davies, *Op Cit*, p 141.

popular holiday stitutations, could lead to new ways of thinking about the system. The concept of the vigorous virago could, for example, offer " an unruly option within the family." Furthermore when this festive image was combined with the complex licence afforded to women, by virtue both of masculine society's perception of their naturally rebellious humour and the anonymity they possessed in the eyes of the law during the eighteenth century, an even more explosive potential existed. In particular their lack of an independent legal personality - independent that is from their fathers, husbands and brothers who were considered liable for their actions - gave women something of an advantage in the arena of social protest. Riots against enclosure, the export of grain and recruitment for the military in the seventeenth and eighteenth century all involved a high proportion of women. Men acknowledged their advantage when they dressed as women in the Lady Skimmington riots in Wiltshire, the Rebecca riots in Wales, and as Molly Maguires in Ireland during the nineteenth century. Transvestism was a device to protect one's anonymity and in doing so deflect the full wrath of the law.[8]

Despite such a provocative thesis (in which Davies also sees the " woman on top" as a resource for contemporary feminist reflection on the ability of women in a society dominated by males) it must be said that at the specific level she cannot point to direct connections between festive play with the vigorous virago and the behaviour of women - or men dressed as women - in the

8. Ibid pp 124-6, 148-9.

family or society. Certainly in Coventry there is no evidence of such a link. Nevertheless the idea and the potential were there.

Between Godiva and St George there were streamers, buglers, some city followers and usually a band. The latter was generally provided by the regiment billeted, or in the later part of our period barracked, in the city at the time. Their participation was an attempt to build bridges with a population which was all too often alienated by the methods of billeting and recruitment, as well as by the behaviour of the troops.[9]

In the early years of the eighteenth century a man representing Peeping Tom was carried in a watch box (a wooden box with bars used to transport and sometimes exhibit prisoners) behind Godiva. So incarcerated he was the object of physical and verbal abuse. The practice was eventually stopped after one "poor fellow" died as a result.[10]

To understand why the crowd was so hostile to Peeping Tom, we have to return to the legend, or at least that version which was current from the sixteenth century onwards. For it was he alone who broke Godiva's strict instructions to stay indoors and refrain from looking during the period of the ride. Like many similar mythological figures he was punished for his transgression by the loss of his sight.[11]

9. J.C.M June 9 1800, May 15 1809. For an account of the relations between the Town and the military see V.C.H, Op Cit, p 225.

10. Lancaster, Op Cit, p 67: W. Reader, "The origin and description of Coventry Show Fair" (C&WC JN 398.2)

11. Lancaster, Op Cit, pp 53-4, 66.

Blind or not, he attracted nothing but popular contempt. A hatred for spies and informers was an integral part of English popular culture during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One of the essential reasons for the failure of the Society for the Reformation of Manners, for example, was its use of informers to extend their moral revolution. Despite the blessing of Queen Anne, this particular tactic excited great popular distaste. As Peeping Tom was the chief of spies it is not surprising that he received a similar reaction. Even after a human representation of this figure had disappeared from the Cavalcade, the Processioners took an almost ritual care to visit his statue at a house adjoining the King's Head, where the crowd took great delight in venting their righteous fury at this most despicable of characters in the history of the city.[12]

Interestingly the antipathy towards Peeping Tom is particularly evident for the 1790's. This may have reflected popular concern at the secretive activities of the government in relation to the corresponding societies. One of the most colourful incidents involved a number of Irish dragoons who one night

raised a ladder to take...[the statue] down, alledging that he had told tales of them to their officers, and that they would make him stand sentry for them at the new barrack gate.

12. C.C.R.O Acc 122. On hostility to informers see Bahlman, The Moral Revolution of 1688, p 47.

The occupant of the house where it stood had to employ his pistols to defend it.[13]

St George, Godiva and Peeping Tom were all popular legendary figures with a particular, and in the last two cases a unique, relationship with the city of Coventry. But it should be remembered that the Show Fair was principally and originally a civic event. As such it was composed, in the main, by civic regalia and personnel. The City Cryer and the Beadle on each side of Godiva were dressed in the colours of the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and followed by the Mayor's cryer, the city bailiffs, the Corporation maces, the sword and mace, the Mayor, the aldermen, the sheriffs, the common council men, the Chamberlain and the Warden. Their retinue was re-enforced by a number of followers.

This heavy corporate presence provided the Procession with a good deal of gravitas and ensured that it enjoyed widespread support among all sections of local society. In return the Show Fair gave the officers of the Corporation a rare opportunity to actualise their status in the eyes of the community as a whole. During a period when office was costly, and for those who took up the freedom of the city, practically obligatory, this was an important incentive.[14]

Behind the Corporation came the trading companies. By 1810 the Mercers were followed by the Drapers, the Clothiers, the Blacksmiths, the Taylors, the Cappers, the Butchers, the Fellmongers, the Carpenters,

13. Charles Nowell (ed), The Reader Manuscripts, p 50.

14. Charles Phythian-Adams, " Ceremony and the Citizen; the communal year at Coventry 1450-1550", in Clark and Slack (ed) English Towns in Transition, p62.

the Cordwainers, the Bakers, the Weavers, the Silk Weavers and the Woolcombers. Over the period as a whole the number of companies in the Cavalcade had expanded from ten in 1678, to twelve by 1789, reaching a peak of fourteen in the early nineteenth century. This was a result both of the increasing attraction of the event, and of changes in the number and the structure of occupational groupings in the city; the Weavers company of 1678, for example, split in 1703 into two separate organisations, one for worsted and the other for silk. Other companies, like the Tylers, the Feltmakers and the Shoemakers departed from the Procession, while still others such as the Woolcombers joined it anew.[15]

Between 1678 and 1835 the order of the companies changed little. The rationale behind the original order of the Procession is not clear; it may have reflected the wealth of the companies - with the Drapers and the Mercers appropriately at the front and the Feltmakers and the Shoemakers at the back - or, as Charles Phythian-Adams has suggested in respect of pageants in the city between 1450 and 1550, it may have reflected their traditional contribution to civic life, in general, and office holding, in particular. However the relative stability of the order in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century would suggest that it lost any real or dynamic social meaning as the period progressed; that it was a legacy of history rather than "a mechanism ...by which the tensions implicit in the diachronic rise and fall of occupation communities could be confronted

15. B. Poole, Coventry; Its History and Antiquities, p 64: Nowell, Op Cit,: See Appendix.

and worked out" or even a " visual and a public recognition...[of] changes in the relationship of superiority, dependence or co-operation between occupations." [16]

The last two quotations come from the study by Mervyn James on " Ritual, Drama and Social Body", in which he sought to place the Corpus Christi Processions and the mystery plays which accompanied them in the context of the Medieval Town, in general, and various provincial capitals, in particular. In doing so he developed the fertile idea that the form of these pageants both reflected and realised the notion of social body which underlay contemporary perceptions of the unitary medieval community. He used that concept to argue that " Corpus Christi resolves into what could be seen as the binary terms of a Levi-Straussian mythological contradiction: social wholeness versus social differentiation". In a similar vein Charles Phythian-Adams has argued that " although ceremony obviously helped to transform the formal constitution of the [medieval] city into some sort of social reality, conversely it was also a valued instrument through which the basic divisions of humanity by sex, age and wealth could be related to the structure of the community." [17]

Obviously by the late seventeenth century the relationship between " ceremony and the citizen" was

16. M. James, " Ritual, Drama and Social Body", in Past and Present no 98 p 15. William Reader stated that the city companies " now commence their appearance in the Cavalcade, beginning with the most ancient and following according to seniority." See Reader, Lady Godiva Pamphlet 1826 (C & WC JN 398.2), p 20.
17. James, *Op Cit*, p9 : Phythian Adams, *Op Cit*, pp 63-4.

rather different. The Renaissance and the Reformation had combined to destroy both the context and the fabric of the ceremonial life with which James and Phythian-Adams are concerned. Nevertheless their work suggests some ways of interpreting the social meaning of the Godiva Procession as a whole. Like the Corpus Christi Procession, which, in historical terms, had preceded it, the Show Fair was an occasion when "the community in its entirety was literally defining itself for all to see". Moreover it is significant that, in spite of the vast changes in the nature and the cohesion of the urban community, the prevailing image which emerges from the Godiva Procession, is the same as that which characterised the celebration of Corpus Christi. It may be that the concept of social body has as much to do with the structure and the limitations of the processional form, as with the particular context in which it was performed. [18]

Such a conclusion would suggest that it is possible to approach the study of public ritual "independent de tout sujet, de tout objet, et de tout contexte" and to interpret it purely in terms of its internal structure. But that is precisely the approach that I want to avoid. Furthermore it would not help to explain why the Godiva Procession can be seen as social body, while the Guild Day Procession cannot. To understand that we have to return to the context and to look at the very different distribution of power within Norwich and Coventry. In the former civic power was

18. Phythian-Adams, *Op Cit*, p 58.

concentrated in the hands of an open, relatively democratic corporation which, by the charter of 1621, had almost complete control over the companies. Their subordination had resulted in a loss of influence and appeal. By the eighteenth century they seem to have become quite irrelevant in people's lives. In contrast the companies of Coventry remained vital and vigorous. Indeed up until 1721 they controlled the admission to the freedom and thus the franchise of the city. Although with the loss of this responsibility and with the advance of the national market economy, their real power diminished in the course of the eighteenth century, their continuing social role made them a force to be reckoned with in a community where, despite, or perhaps because of, the closed nature of the Corporation, "there existed a certain tension and free play of political and social forces...in which order and unity needed to be continually affirmed in terms of shared rite and shared ritual." [19]

Of course there was a vast difference in the nature of the events celebrated by the Guild and the Godiva Procession. For while the former was a ritual means to an inaugural end - with the Corporation and, earlier, the Company of St George being almost the only participants in the formal proceedings - the latter was an attempt to exploit a traditionally communal feast day for commercial ends. It had, of necessity, to portray a larger and a more colourful picture of the community.

19. Hobsbawm and Ranger (ed), The Invention of Tradition, p. 105. James, Op Cit, p. 24:

Moreover, if it was to present a valid and dynamic picture of the city with which people were being invited to trade, it had to grow with that community. The most obvious change to the social life of the city resulted from the formation of benefit societies in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Accordingly in 1818, the "ancient cavalcade" was joined by thirteen such organisations and a number of children who acted as followers for each. In subsequent years their participation helped to elaborate the Procession even further and, as a result, to increase the numbers attracted to the city. By 1824 there were a total of fifteen benefit societies in the Cavalcade.[20]

The Godiva Procession, then, could not afford to be an anachronism. Apart from portraying the legend, it had to present an image of Coventry to which the locals, and those from further afield, could relate. It was fitting, therefore, that the Woolcombers should provide the finale of the Show Fair; as the elite of one of the most important trades in Coventry during most of the period, they had a special responsibility to present the city as a thriving and an established centre of trade. To do so they formed a miniature Blaise Procession. The Shepherd and the Shepherdess in the front were accompanied by a dog and a lamb and followed by Jason with the Golden Fleece and a drawn sword. Blaise came last, resplendent with his robes and his staff.[21]

To most Coventrians the meaning of these figures was clear enough; like the people of Norwich they

20. J.C.M June 7 1818. See Appendix.

21. See Appendix.

knew them as legends in the textile lore with which they were more or less familiar according to their degree of involvement with the local cloth trade. However there were alternative interpretations; a point which brings us back to the notion of popular rejoicing as an ideological battleground on which those with a particular point of view sought to impose their ideas upon an event at the expense of all others. One such was John Whittingham, the most articulate of all Roman Catholics in late eighteenth century Coventry. He believed that Blaise and the Woolcombers were

only a mock upon the bishops and the clergy. Blaise with his red face, his book and his comb...[and] his mitre made of Jersey is intended to hint that bishops love the bottle and that they prey only to have the fleecing of their flock and that the clergy do the same only to a lesser extent.

Whittingham also had an alternative explanation to offer about the twelve guards who were apparently dressed in black armour at the front of the Procession. The black guards, he explained, are "collected from the most deformed and ugly on purpose to show how" much the people of Coventry "disused and abhorred every thing that was good and comly (sic) in religion". There is no reason to believe that Whittingham's view was widely shared beyond the confines of the rather small local Catholic community. They are significant, however, because they suggest that some, or all, of the figures in the Godiva

procession - as well as the Procession itself - were open to a variety of interpretations.[22]

John Whittingham's particular interpretation of the meaning of Blaise, the Woolcombers and the Black Guards was a by-product of his belief that the Godiva Procession was

invented in mockery and derision of that grand show, which was always on Corpus Christi day and which the Catholic Christians of Coventry were remarkable for doing...with amazing grandeur.

It was only after the Reformation that the men of Coventry

set a naked woman on horseback, followed by a fellow in a small house who, by peeping and mocking at her nakedness, excited the rabble to every act of ridicule against the most holy Host which to this day is carried in the grandest processions in all Catholic countries.

Whittingham was not entirely alone in this belief. As late as the 1870's a Mr Tomkinson, the owner of a bookshop and sometime churchwarden of St Michael's parish asserted that " the present show originated" with the pageants and " when the Roman Catholic religion was prohibited, they were continued with many alterations as a mockery." [23]

22. The Diary of John Whittingham of Stoke Farm (C.C.R.O Acc 201) 1772.

23. Ibid: Burbidge, Op Cit, p 53.

In fact the Godiva Procession had no direct historical relationship with the medieval celebration of Corpus Christi, apart, that is, from occupying the same space on the holiday calendar. There was almost a century between the time when the Corpus Christi plays were "laid down" by the Puritans, and 1678 when the Mayor of Coventry, a mercer called Michael Earle, decided to introduce the figure of Godiva to the traditional procession which proclaimed the Trinity fair.[24]

The reasoning behind this innovation was largely economic. The hope was that such a unique and dramatic cavalcade would attract more people to trade at the fair and increase the city's wealth, as a result. In this respect the founders of the Godiva Procession were to succeed beyond their wildest dreams; the numbers attending the Show Fair increased steadily to fifteen thousand by 1772, to twenty thousand by 1826, and, with the coming of the railway, to one hundred thousand by 1852.[25]

The Godiva Procession became a major popular holiday in local, regional and national terms. As such its beginnings were rather modest. In 1678 the figure of Godiva, played by the son of James Swinnerton, was accompanied by only ten of the city's companies, represented by one or, at the most, two boys, the Mayor, the sheriffs, the Standard Bearer and their respective followers. Even so contemporaries clearly believed it was

24. Lancaster, *Op Cit*, p 56.

25. Reader, "The origin and description of the Coventry Show Fair", p 20: C.C.R.O Acc 335: J.C.M June 22 1772. Even Whittingham in his diary accepted that the Godiva Procession "does not now seem to be done for any other cause but to draw company to the Town to spend money."

Such munificence was costly; in 1678 the Cappers and the Taylors spent £16.4s.6d and nineteen pounds respectively.

The poorer the company the greater the burden must have been. There were however clear benefits to be gained from such expenditure. Firstly a good show by a company almost certainly helped to increase or maintain its status in relation to other trading societies in the city. Secondly a spectacular collective performance would ensure greater crowds for the fair, producing a likely boost in the income of many of the companies' members. Finally, and particularly among the poorer companies, such civic commitment could lead to favourable treatment by those with power and patronage within the closed Corporation. Thus, in January 1684, the Council ordered that the lease of the Shoemakers' - probably one of the poorer companies - should be renewed for twenty one years " in consideration of their setting out a boy at the fair." [28]

The early success of the Godiva Procession was due, above all, to the popular and civic consensus which surrounded it. There is no evidence of conflicts over the fundamental value or validity of the Show Fair in the late seventeenth century, and the decline experienced by the event in the period between about 1704 and 1717 seems to have had more to do with the poor financial state of the Corporation, its sponsor, than any moral or authoritarian objections. The apparent revival of the Procession in 1717 was met with just as much enthusiasm as had greeted its inception in 1678. The Mercer's

28. Council Minutes (C.C.R.O A.14 (b)) 14 Jan 1684.

company, for example, "ordered at the request of the Mayor that a boy now ride at the fair and that a pair of shoes and gloves, and a shilling be given" him.[29]

For the next fifty years the Godiva Procession developed and consolidated a position of primacy on the holiday calendar of Coventry. In 1744 the Council "ordered and agreed...[to] ride the great fair with the usual formalities, and that Mr Mayor shall have the usual allowance of five pounds towards the charges thereof." This and their commission of new cloaks for the Waits, the Mayor and other civic officers in 1755, showed a continuing commitment to the Procession as a manifestation of municipal splendour. They were helped in this task by the companies who steadily increased the resources set aside for the affair.[30]

By the early 1760's the Procession was attracting "a great concourse of people". As a result it became something of a magnet for criminals of all kinds. Most were petty thieves; in 1761, for example, several people had their pockets picked, while in the decades which followed, the "diving gentry" became a permanent fixture of the festive landscape. Occasionally, however, the event attracted criminals with somewhat bigger ideas. Perhaps the most notable theft of all occurred in 1763 when a gang of Foys, originally from the North East, but most recently seen in London, took advantage of the

29. This chronology of decline has been gained from a review of the Council minutes and the records of various trading companies. Expenditure on the Godiva Procession was reduced by the Corporation in 1704. Thereafter there was no mention of it in any of the records used until 1st June 1717 in the Mercers' Company Account Book (C.C.R.O Acc 15)

30. Council Minutes (C.C.R.O A.14 (g)) p 92.

"hurry of...[the] fair" to steal two hundred pounds from the Castle Inn and commit diverse other robberies in the city. A gang of twenty five men and women with a reportedly loose sense of sexual morality and a fine taste in dress, their dramatic deeds were still being recalled in 1790.[31]

The criminal exploitation of the Godiva Procession was one of the reasons why, from the late 1760's the consensus which had previously surrounded the Show Fair began to break down. But it was neither the initial nor the most important cause of the opposition which developed to the event in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For that we have to look, in the long term, to the changing nature of politics and society after 1750, and, in the short term, to the polarisation brought about by the campaign of John Wilkes.

As we have seen in chapter seven the political momentum generated by Wilkes and his supporters was neither confined to Middlesex and Parliament nor channelled only into the issues of their choice. In fact the effects of the Wilkite movement spread far and wide, in both political and geographical terms. Two of the consequences of that movement - the repoliticisation of the festive medium and the increasing pressure for democratic reform at the local and the national level - converged to provide the background to the first

31. J.C.M May 25 1761, June 6 1763, June 7 1790: C.S.P.D July 20 1763.

protracted dispute to affect the Godiva Procession in nearly a century of growth.[32]

The seeds of that dispute were sown in the general election of April 1768 when the electoral hegemony of the Whig/Corporation interest was unexpectedly challenged by the Tory/Independent Walter Waring. Although he declared his candidacy late and withdrew before the polls opened, his canvassing of the wards was enough to stimulate the latent antipathy to the Corporation and to shake the confidence of the complacent and absent Members; so much so that the Corporation candidates were forced to return from their premature celebrations in the country and treat the neglected freemen, with the respect and the generosity they undoubtedly felt they deserved.

Even though the Corporation candidates secured an unopposed victory, it was clear that Walter Waring's candidacy had altered the political landscape of the city. The re-emergence of the Tory/Independent interest in Coventry was given an unexpected boost when Andrew Archer, one of the recently elected M.P's was elevated to the Lords. The subsequent by-election proved to be one of the most vigorous and vitriolic in Coventry's turbulent electoral history. It was this which provided the immediate context for the first notable divergence of opinion over the Show Fair.

The Tories/Independents invited Sir Richard Glyn, an alderman from London and a merchant banker, to

32. G. Rude, Wilkes and Liberty: J. Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III, ch 9.

represent them. Although an opponent of Wilkes in the Middlesex elections, Glyn's campaign bore some of the hallmarks of his erstwhile political opponent. The chants of "no Corporation slavery" and "High Church - Glyn and Liberty" were the most resonant of the slogans used by the Tories and Independents to discredit the Council. Helped by the growing hostility among the Coventry freemen to the closed Corporation, in general, and the disproportionate power of the Nonconformist minority, in particular, Glyn, like Wilkes before and after him, romped home to an unexpected and a comprehensive victory.

His success was celebrated throughout the city. Immediately after the close of the poll the freemen and the trading companies made up a procession to chair Glyn through the streets; in a new chair of white satin with a canopy draped in blue and white ribbons he was carried in triumph from the Guild Hall to the Cross. The speech which followed included a threat to issue writs of mandamus against the corrupt electoral practices of the Corporation. Meanwhile the church bells rang and a sheep was roasted in each of the wards.[33]

Understandably the Corporation was furious; not just about the manner, the extent, and the potential of Glyn's victory at the polls, but also over the celebrations which followed. The participation of the companies, the freemen and the parishes endowed these essentially partisan festivities with a civic and official tone; a quality over which the Corporation traditionally had a monopoly. But as in Norwich during the 1720's the

33. J.C.M Dec 12 1768: Whitley, The Parliamentary History of Coventry, pp 165-71.

rulers of Coventry knew they were powerless to act. In law these political revellers were beyond reproach. The only effective means of retaliation was through the festive medium. Their chosen instrument in this respect was the Godiva Procession.

Thus, on April 25th 1769, the Council "unanimously agreed that the riding and the reception at the Great Fair...be...henceforth discontinued as an unnecessary expense." Ostensibly on the grounds of cost, the real motivation behind this decision by the Corporation was made clear in a poem which appeared in the (admittedly partisan) Mercury about three weeks later. In mocking tones it noted that

Since hated Glyn in pompous chair/ High mounted
with a num'rous train/ Of our sworn foes, with
conquest vain/ Have lately travers'd o'er the
town/ And far our rate show outshone/ This
insult fitly to return/ And teach those
wretches that we spurn/ By meer parade and
pageantry/ To purchase popularity/ Hence we
forever doom to fall/ Godiva, Black Guards,
Blaze and all.

Of course this was a highly biased source. A more objective test of the explanation offered by the Corporation is provided by a look at the Council's own accounts. The fact is that, at this time, the Corporation was enjoying relative financial health. Despite having to pay out large sums to fight the writs of mandamus issued by Glyn et al, there is no evidence of cut backs elsewhere and the Council even managed to provide a new cloak for the Cryer. Furthermore as the Show Fair originated and was continually justified as an economic good, a decision to abolish it on financial grounds would

be like cutting off the corporate nose to spite the civic face.[34]

The impression that a financial justification was being offered for an essentially political decision is substantiated by a mock report in the Coventry Mercury of May 22nd that

notwithstanding the scandalous report, industriously propagated in order to prejudice a certain respectable body in the opinion of the public, we are assured that...far from harbouring the least intention of suppressing the customary show at the ensuing fair [the Corporation] are determined to support it with uncommon splendour; for which purpose they have engaged at a very considerable expense, some capital performers from London to assist in the Procession [viz]

The part of Lady Godiva will be performed by the celebrated Mrs M ' A....Y: Peeping Tom by Sir F.B.D.....d: St George by Sir J. M....Y: Bishop Blaze by Parson H..ne and the inferior characters of Black Guards, Morris Dancers etc by a select detachment of the supporters of the Bill of Rights from the London Tavern.

These were all people with political or social associations with the person of John Wilkes.[35]

It should come as no surprise that the Show Fair was seen as a medium, by radical and establishment alike, for political discourse, particularly in the

34. C.C.R.O A.14 (j): J.C.M May 15 1769.

35. I have been unable to discover the name of the character suggested for the role of Lady Godiva but the part of Peeping Tom was to be played by Sir Francis Baron Dispenser Dashwood, a chancellor of the 1760's known for his incompetence and leader of the Medenham Set (a group which collected for alcoholic and sexual excess) to which Wilkes belonged. St George was to be impersonated by Sir Joseph Mawbey, a founding member of the S.S.B.R. and the man who returned the thanks of the Southwark electors to Wilkes for his opposition to the Cider Tax. The part of Bishop Blaze was to be played by Parson Horne who Rude described as Wilkes's "most energetic election agent." See Rude, Op Cit, p 82.

context of the Wilkite campaign. John Brewer's work on the mock mayor-making ceremony at Garrat is instructive in this respect. The big difference between the two events was that while the election at Garrat was an essentially popular event funded by the local brewers, the Godiva Procession was principally a civic event, sponsored and controlled by the Corporation. Thus while the former was vulnerable to more or less successful political exploitation, the latter could quite easily be put out of bounds by a council determined to resist the radical tide. As a result the Godiva Procession could and was simply abolished.

The transparently ostensible nature of the Corporation's financial excuse for not having the Procession in 1769 became even clearer in the following years. For while, in 1770, the Council "ordered that the riding at the Great Fair be continued as usual", in May 1771 they proclaimed that

taking into...consideration an order made on 25th of April 1769 for discontinuing the Fair Procession the said order now stands confirmed...with the addition that if any mayor in future shall revive it without the consent of this house no part of the expense...shall be in any manner paid or allowed by this corporation.

Twelve months later they changed their mind once more and "ordered that...the Great Fair be continued as theretofore" and the Mayor's allowance be restored for that purpose. [36]

36. G.C.R.O A.14 (j) 25 April 1769, 7 June 1770, 10 May 1771.

Despite the inability or the unwillingness of the Corporation to retain its hostile stance towards the Show Fair, they did succeed in shattering the consensus which until late had surrounded and supported this most popular of civic events on the city's holiday calendar. Consequently, from the late 1770's, the nature and the perception of the Godiva Procession changed quite fundamentally. The fact that this was a protracted process - only reaching its conclusion sixty years later - is both an indication of the growing popularity of the Cavalcade and an interesting commentary on the nature, pace and extent of the divergence of polite and plebeian culture in the city of Coventry.

The apparent decline of the Procession in the 1770's both illuminated and pre-empted long term changes in the nature and the social meaning of the event. The Show Fair probably reached its lowest point in 1777. In that year the Coventry Mercury remarked that " the Procession...was greatly inferior in point of splendour to any exhibited on the former and the like occasion." Specifically and significantly it pointed to " a very visible decrease...in the usual number of jersey combers, [the] several number of...aldermen [who] absented themselves and the dresses of many of the followers [which] were far from being superb."

Only the figure of Godiva " served to alleviate" the general decline; " the beautiful form of the young woman...[was complimented by] a very handsome face...[and] blessed with every other accomplishment necessary to constitute her person over what the world

term mediocrity." Over the next eighty years the popular focus would gradually shift away from the grandeur of the Corporation and the companies towards the figure of Lady Godiva. This was part and parcel of a development which involved the transformation of the Show Fair from an essentially civic to a predominantly popular holiday event. That tendency was exacerbated by a fundamental change in the source and method of financial support for the Cavalcade.

Such a change was necessitated by the decision of the Corporation in the early 1780's to end its sponsorship of the Cavalcade. At some time in the late 1770's the Council ceased to make an annual allowance to the Mayor for "riding at the Great Fair" and, after two rather elaborate processions in 1779 and 1780, the "usual Cavalcade" was let down. From 1781 to 1787 there was no Godiva Procession in Coventry.[37]

It did not reappear until 1788, when it was revived under new management. Interest in the event had been rekindled by the introduction of a similar procession at Hinkley in Leicestershire where, in 1786, "several respectable inhabitants" entered into a subscription to revive "an ancient custom of a cavalcade of Millers" on Whit Monday. The Millers were accompanied by "a Lady...on horseback...[and] a band of music" along with "the several orders of woolcombers, framework knitters" and other occupational groups in the town.[38]

The obvious success of this venture provided the incentive and the model for a committee of members

37. J.C.M June 22 1777, June 7 1779, June 3 1782.

38. J.C.M May 29 1786.

from the different wards in Coventry to restore Godiva to her accustomed place on the city's holiday calendar. They also raised a subscription to fund the event; one further example of the growing popularity of this relatively new and commercial means of funding public leisure. The majority of subscribers seem to have been alehouse keepers who, of course, had a particular interest in reviving such a traditionally Bacchanalian festival. That impression is confirmed by a notice in the Coventry Mercury of June 8 1793 in which the public were

respectfully informed by the MANAGERS, that the only victuallers who did not subscribe in the Spon Street Ward towards defraying the cost of the late Show Fair were Mr Lister at the Malt Shovel, Mr Mallet at the Rising Sun and Mr Rawlinks at the Black Swan.

It was as if they had refused to participate in an illumination or any other display of communitas; by refusing to contribute to the cost of the Procession they had pitched themselves against the will of the community, elevated their individual interest over that of the generality, and consequently deserved to be shunned.

The increased role of the alehouse keepers in relation to the Godiva Procession was one example of their more entrepreneurial activity in the arena of public leisure. While the Show Fair brought benefits to the entire community because of the increased trade which resulted, it is quite clear that the alehouse keepers were the economic group with the most to gain from the event. Moreover they and others soon recognised their self interest in this respect. As a result the Godiva

Procession, even more than the Guild Day in Norwich, was able to withstand the impact of the moral and other criticisms aimed at rejoicing and ritual in the early nineteenth century.[39]

Indeed in the early 1800's the Show Fair was an object of almost unanimous approval. In June 1803, for example, the Coventry Mercury greeted the return of the Procession after the rather subdued event of the previous year with the comment that

the preparations...go on with much spirit and we have no doubt but...general emulation will be conspicuously displayed by all ranks of persons at the present juncture, as it is considered a PUBLIC GOOD.[40]

The only evidence of hostility towards the Procession at this stage comes from the minutes of the Freemasons, which, on May 15th 1807 recorded that the "brethren...[being] invited by the Mayor to take part in the Procession in connection with the Show Fair...it was the unanimous opinion of...[those] present that it would be very improper." The Masons, however, were an exceptional group. Believing themselves to be in the vanguard of respectable Christianity they rarely took part in civic processions at all. But as a vanguard, it is fair to say, they were light years ahead of the army they sought to lead.[41]

Throughout the 1810's and the 1820's the Godiva Procession continued to receive enthusiastic support from

39. P. Clark, The English Alehouse; A Social History 1200-1830, p 253.

40. J.C.M June 6 1803.

41. F. Foster (ed), History of the Trinity Lodge of Freemasons, p 36.

most sections of local society. Indeed the participation of the benefit societies after 1818 gave an additional and a respectable impetus to the event. In 1821 the Coventry Mercury in a triumphantly clear and unusually accurate account of the origins of the Cavalcade commented that it

was of unusual extent, owing to the increased number of families introduced by the societies...with upwards of seventy children, the splendour and elegance of whose dresses were never surpassed on any former occasion.

This "scene of general festivity" was "attended by a vast assemblage of spectators not only from the vicinity of this city but from counties far removed". Familial, respectable and popular; there was not the slightest hint of the storm to come.[42]

The only cloud on this otherwise glorious day was the success of the "diving fraternity". In fact crime - so much a feature of the event in the eighteenth century - continued to plague the Show Fair. In 1828, for example, a watch and a new hat were stolen in broad daylight and there were burglaries at the offices of two solicitors during the week. There were also a number of accidents resulting directly or otherwise from the festive activities, the most serious of which "was at the bottom of Hertford Street on Wednesday night, when a horse took fright at the sounds of music on the outside of a show...knocking down a man and a woman, both of whom were severely injured." Two years later the Royal Mint dispatched an agent called Levi to Coventry "for the

purpose of detecting persons who passed or sold bad money and came to...[the] fair" to do so. As a result of his endeavours " a man and a woman by the name of Kearney were charged with selling a quantity of counterfiet coin" at some of the city's alehouses.

Such incidents provided ammunition for the few but progressively more evident critics of the Show Fair, in general, and the Godiva Procession, in particular. In the early 1820's the noise, disorder and crime which attended the event became a major issue in the now desperately overcrowded City of Coventry. In 1823 the main shows and stalls were moved off the streets and on to Greyfriars Green in an attempt to divert the crowds from the narrow lanes of the city centre. After 1825 the Green became the permanent focus for the fair.[43]

The complaints about overcrowding and its consequences during the time of this or any other fair were not new. Unlike Norwich, Coventry had no space to expand within its walls; the intense and unplanned way it had grown had produced a particularly narrow set of streets. Overcrowding had been a problem in Coventry since the early eighteenth century; markets and fairs only exacerbated the daily difficulties and the fequent attempts of the magistrates to solve the problem by regulating the positions and the activities of local traders only brought temporary relief. With the population growth of the early nineteenth century in Coventry and other towns the traditional battle for urban space merely became more intense.[44]

43. J.C.M June 15 1828, June 27 1830.

44. Lancaster, Op Cit, pp 59-60.

In response to the tension provoked by this increasing competition the magistrates of Coventry initiated a series of improvements to the city centre. Between 1790 and 1820 it was changed radically. Perhaps the most important product of this movement was the construction of Hertford Street as a new thoroughfare in 1812. This led directly to an alteration in the route of the Godiva Procession, the only one in its history to date.[45]

To explain the increasing number of complaints about the Show Fair solely in terms of the greater pressure on urban space would not be entirely satisfactory. For they also have to be seen against the background of the divergence of polite and plebeian cultures discussed in chapter eight. One of the points to emerge from that chapter was the limitation exercised upon the changes sought by the polite and the respectable in nineteenth century Coventry by the existence of a large confident and relatively homogenous working class. Nowhere was this clearer than in the struggle over the Godiva Procession.

The first shots in the battle over the Show Fair were fired in the mid 1820's immediately after the expressions of concern about the overcrowding visited upon the city at the time of the Procession had reached their peak. Significantly it was the company of Mercers who took the initial step in a series of moves by some of the more self consciously respectable citizens away from and against the event. Traditionally the wealthiest and

45. See Appendix. The route is given on the bills advertising the fair.

most prestigious of occupations in the early modern urban economy, they had enjoyed the prime position at the head of the Cavalcade. However in a pamphlet written in 1826 William Reader, contemporary, antiquarian and sometime editor of the Coventry Mercury expressed his concern about the absence of the Mercers from "the show in recent years." [46]

The Mercers like the Masons can be seen as trend setters of respectable civic opinion. It was not long before other elements in the political and social elite of the city followed their lead. In the following few years there seems to have been a determined effort on the part of the Corporation, in particular, to downgrade the Godiva Procession as a popular civic event. This coincided with a major effort on the part of the Council to reform its previously corrupt and inept procedures. Apparently in 1825 or 1827 the extremely generous offer of £100 and a band from the officers of the Dragoons to facilitate a cavalcade was turned down by the Mayor, while in 1830 the Corporation itself refused to ride at the fair. They had appeared for the final time in the previous year, thus completing a process of withdrawal which, in its financial aspect at least, can be traced back to the late 1760's. [47]

These were major blows to the standing of the Show Fair. Nevertheless the Procession continued to enjoy a great deal of good will from the community as a whole

46. D&WC JN 398.2

47. Burbidge, *Op Cit*, p 57; R. Palmer, *The Folklore of Warwickshire*, p 136.

and the Tory press in particular. In 1829 the Herald commented that

never was more care observed in the embellishment of the exterior of the houses. All the implements for painting and colouring have been put in requisition and old city certainly indicates a disposition to " smile amidst her fears."

Furthermore in the particularly severe economic climate of the late 1820's the paper still felt able to defend the Show Fair against those that say " poverty and pageantry constitute but a degrading combination, and that a collection for the poor one day, and for a show on another form together an anomalous proceeding." Of course in doing so the paper hinted at the novel nature and the increasing extent of the criticisms ranged against the Procession. But they also evinced the ability of those who supported the event to justify it along functional lines; as a means to allow " sorrow...[to] be forgotten...[so] that people can be induced to cease brooding over their melancholy" it ensured that after "the relaxation of the fair, they will be better able to grapple with the difficulty of their stations." [48]

There were others too who stood to defend the Procession. William Reader probably echoed the thoughts of many in Coventry during the 1820's when he protested that " our ancient customs are day by day rapidly vanishing in this *improved* age, but while we find that they are removed with an unsparing hand, we do not find that anything better is substituted in their place." In

fact even those who eventually withdrew from the Procession can be said to have had a long standing sympathy with the event. The case of Henry Adams is exemplary in this respect. For while, as the first post-Reform Mayor of Coventry, he turned down a request to support the Procession because the

vast and rapid advance that has of late been made in the progress of civilisation and mental acquirement, has rendered an exhibition like that of Godiva anything but satisfactory to the great body of society

it remained true that only a few years previously he had participated in the Cavalcade as Master of the Drapers Company. Then " he rode in a carriage accompanied by a portion of the female part of his family, splendidly decorated as followers."[49]

Such a dramatic change of heart can only be understood in the context of Reform. As for the Guild Day at Norwich the passage of the bill for reforming the municipal corporations brought about a rapid and a fundamental shift in attitudes towards the Show Fair. As a result the Godiva Procession was finally deprived of its civic status.

However it would be wrong to push the analogy between the Godiva Procession and the Guild Day too far. For while the latter was abolished (to be perpetuated only by the mockery at Pockthorpe) the former survived as a real and an established feature of the local popular holiday calendar. The often problematic shift of the Show Fair away from a civic to a popular base had finally

proved worthwhile. As a result and unlike many comparable events elsewhere, the Godiva Procession was able to withstand the shock of Reform as well as the civic withdrawal which accompanied it.

As popular holiday, devoid and independent of civic legitimation, the Godiva Procession took place frequently but irregularly for the rest of the nineteenth century. Of course there had to be many changes. Firstly the context of the Procession changed; no longer the necessary prelude to the Trinity fair it continued as the central attraction of Spon End wake with the sponsorship of the local alesellers. Later, in the last part of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth centuries, it took place as a celebration of different but notable events, such as Victoria's Jubilee or the opening of the new hospital in 1911.[50]

Despite the shifts in the location and the occasion of the Procession it remained a community pageant. But deprived of the civic figures the organisers of the event had to introduce new elements into the Cavalcade. All had close associations with Coventry; kings like Edward the Black Prince and Richard II, literary figures like Sir John Falstaff, as well as more local figures like "William and Adam Butcher, whose names were intimately associated with St Michael's church, Sir Thomas White, the great benefactor to the City, John Hales, founder of the Free School" and Sir William Dugdale the Warwickshire antiquarian.[51]

50. Lancaster, *Op Cit*, p 59.

51. Poole, *Op Cit*, p 67.

So the Godiva Procession survived. But like many other popular cultural phenomena it was subjected to a barrage of criticism in the middle of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the fiercest and certainly the most extensively read of all its foes was Thomas Collins, a Wesleyan Methodist preacher. He published two pamphlets, in 1844 and 1845, of which the second was entitled an "appeal to the intelligent and respectable inhabitants of the city of Coventry...[relating] to the Lady Godiva Procession in which its absurdity and flagrant indecency are fully attested." In it he argued that

the Procession is entirely a party matter, that it is not the Procession of the city of Coventry; that the magistrates, the clergy of the Establishment and the ministers of the other places of worship, with their congregations generally, are averse to it, that it is the work of a faction, a faction intent on private interest, ready to sell the reputation of your city for that ready to insult you at home and degrade you abroad for that.

In both pamphlets he made particular play of the drunkenness which accompanied the event, of the moral corruption which resulted, and of the negative effect such a show had on the work of the Sunday school movement among the young people of Coventry, in general, and Spon End, in particular.[52]

Reverend Collins was only the most prolific of a number of clergymen who attempted to stop the

52. T. Collins, Brief reflections suggested to those inhabitants of the City of Coventry who patronised the Procession in Spon Street, July 8 1844, and An appeal to the intelligent and respectable inhabitants of the City of Coventry, founded on public documents relating to the Lady Godiva Procession in which its absurdity and flagrant indecency are fully attested. (C&WC JN 398.2)

Procession in 1845. Even the Bishop of Worcester urged the Mayor against "a Birmingham [strumpet] being paraded through the streets as Queen (sic) Godiva." In the context of "popular recreations under attack" in the early nineteenth century these were familiar voices; Malcolmsen, Bushaway and Storch have all been able to point to similar diatribes in their own work. What is less familiar, less expected and, one might think, less characteristic of the times was the reaction which the views of Collins, the Bishop and others evoked.

Thomas Collins' first paper of 1844 received a particularly sharp reply. In a fierce counter attack, in which anonymity was the only concession to the polite momentum of the 1840's, the author labelled Collins a religious bigot, one of those

who would once have punished what they disapproved of by confiscation, imprisonment or death but are now obliged to content themselves with holding up their neighbours, as far as their abilities allow, to public contempt and odium.

Having dispensed with most of Collin's arguments as illusory or hypocritical the writer pointed to the opposite but essentially related excesses of the Interregnum and the Restoration to conclude that if

the springs of natural gaiety are broken, if amusements are proscribed and labour is to be varied only by preachings and prayer meetings...the reaction...[will involve] a far greater amount of vice than such a system was established to suppress.

In doing so the author could easily have been mistaken for an early eighteenth century apostle of tolerance and traditional values; one of those who fought so valiantly against a revival of the "enthusiasm" which brought on the civil war.[53]

In fact he might as well have been. For, as I argued in chapter eight, the social structure and economy of Coventry had remained relatively static since that time. While the city could not entirely escape the consequences of economic development and political reform the combination of a large, powerful and conservative artisanal class and the severe spatial restrictions which inhibited industrial growth and the emergence of a concomitant set of values and attitudes, limited the scope for polite intrusion upon plebeian delights. One of the greatest such delights was the Godiva Procession. This explains the ability of such a raucous event to survive the onslaught of Collins and his like. Indeed with the coming of the railway in 1838 and the greater attention to provincial matters in the national press, the Godiva Procession, now elevated to the status of a natural curiosity, actually gained in popularity.

The essential security of the Godiva Procession in the 1840's and '50's allowed it to become something of a repository for the most ribald elements of the local popular culture. Particular play was made of the allegedly naked state of the original and old time Godiva. In the weeks before the event rumours circulated in the city's alehouses that this year the Lady was to

53. Observations on a pamphlet entitled Brief Reflections [etc] 1845 (C&WC JN 398.2)

"appear as her original", while the locals took great delight in teasing the London papers with stories of how Godiva rode naked in the processions before Municipal Reform.[54]

Both before and during the Procession, the figure of Godiva was now the unchallenged focus of popular attention. The part of the Lady and her attendants were usually played by actresses from London or Birmingham; a wise move given the reaction she provoked from the spectators. In 1842, for example, the impersonation by a "female from Birmingham" was "so close an imitation of the celebrated Countess that she nearly caused a riot among the crowd who were anxious for a closer view." The strength of the local interest was such that she had to be rescued by the committee of trade which had organised the event and borne away in a carriage. Unfortunately the vehicle broke down and the poor Lady had to take refuge in a hairdresser's shop.[55]

Attempts to interfere with the image of Godiva, no matter how minor, provoked great hostility among the city's population. In the 1820's William Reader reported how

on some recent occasions...changes of a most ridiculous nature have been made, by the addition of of a sort of petticoat [to the dress of Godiva] thus destroying all the illusion of the personification, and sacrificing consistency at the altar of mock delicacy.

54. Burbidge, *Op Cit*, p 62.

55. *Ibid* p 60.

In this, as in many other things, Reader was in line with the feeling of the populace at large. Later attempts to make Godiva more respectable merely attracted ridicule; perhaps reflecting the renewed confidence of the event's supporters after the tide of Reform had passed. The attempt of a hysterical clergyman in the 1840's to present Godiva with more clothes provoked a roar of laughter from the crowd as the Lady (from the music hall by all accounts) responded with the comment that "I've never had more clothes on in all my life." [56]

One of the highlights of the unsuccessful battle to make Godiva more respectable came in 1854. It seems that on this occasion the rather restrained appearance of the eminently respectable Miss Taylor from the Royal Academy was not entirely satisfying to some sections of the crowd. Consequently many rejoiced at the appearance of a rival actress from the Lyceum who in "tights, stays, white boots and a tiara...[was] preceeded by a banner inscribed "Dieu et Mon Droit" and followed by another announcing that "To the pure all things are pure". [57]

Although that particular incident excited a good deal of genteel wrath, the Procession continued to enjoy the support and attendance of people from all classes in the city; one example of the relative lack of social and economic polarisation in Coventry before the 1860's. The fact that Thomas Collins had to address his views to the "intelligent and respectable" is an implicit admission of their complicity in the affair.

56. Reader, Op Cit, p 19; Burbidge, Op Cit, p 62.

57. Burbidge, Op Cit, p 61.

Furthermore although he portrayed the Procession as a matter of party, there is no suggestion that he used that phrase in its political sense. In marked contrast to the sectarian attitudes to the Guild Day at Norwich there is no evidence, for the 1830's or at any other time, of a protracted split between the Whigs and the Tories or even the Liberals and the Conservatives over the issue of the Godiva Procession. Indeed in 1852 Sir Joseph Paxton, the Liberal M.P. for the city, professed himself to be "very glad to contribute £10 towards the fund" for the show. Citing the benefits which were likely to arise from expected crowds of up to 100,000 people he went on to admit that he "for one [would] be sorry to see this relic of bygone days entirely cast aside".

111

The Godiva Procession, then, survived the ravages of Reform, albeit in radically altered form. This was in marked contrast to the fate of the Guild. In trying to explain their particular fortunes great emphasis must be placed on the very different social, economic and political contexts in which they were performed. In Norwich the polarisation of local society led to the demise of the Guild; in Coventry the relative harmony which prevailed and the presence of an assertive and conservative class of artisans ensured that the Show Fair lived on.

But there were also other reasons why the Godiva Procession continued after Reform. The most important was the increasingly popular, rather than civic, nature of the event after 1750. This development was given further momentum by the change of management from the Corporation to a committee in 1787. That ensured that the Show Fair would survive. For with an independent financial base it could withstand losing the support of the Council and others in the late 1820's.

The Godiva Procession was not, however, without enemies or critics. Indeed in an overcrowded city it would have been extraordinary if it were. Nevertheless, as for the Guild in Norwich, the Show Fair did enjoy almost solid social support until the end of our period. As at Norwich the criticism thrown at this and other festive events was only apparent, in any significant fashion, in the late 1820's and, among some like Henry Adams only on the eve or the very morrow of Reform.

Of course even after that date the Procession continued to enjoy the patronage of people from all social classes, from within and outside the city. Indeed as the nineteenth century progressed it became ever more popular. Part of the reason, as Sir Joseph Paxton suggested, was its all too evident commercial value, particularly for the alehouse keepers who largely financed it. But it was also true that the vitality of the Procession in the mid nineteenth century owed much to the tolerant nature of the context in which it was performed.

Conclusion.

Popular rejoicing and public ritual was an intrinsic part of social, political, and economic life in the cities of Norwich and Coventry from the Restoration to Municipal Reform. As such it was subject to many changes and pressures. During this period it was exploited in commercial and political terms as never before.

Its capacity to benefit economic and sectarian interests was one of the reasons why until the very end of the period it continued to enjoy the support and patronage of the majority of individuals and social groups. Nevertheless it was increasingly the object of criticism; antagonism which in the early eighteenth century was limited to questions of public order, but which after 1750 was characterised more and more by concerns about decorum and morality.

Those expressing such concerns were, overwhelmingly, from the middle and upper classes. What united them by the early nineteenth century was a distinctively polite world view; a consensus between them which had been established over a century or more and which led them at first to withdraw from and then seek to repress or undermine festivity and other aspects of popular culture.

This divergence of polite and plebeian cultures in respect of rejoicing and ritual at Norwich and Coventry did not proceed at the same pace or in the same

way at all points in the period. For perhaps a century after the Restoration it was hardly apparent at all. It was only after 1750 that it gathered momentum and it was not until surprisingly late in the period - in many cases not until the very eve of Municipal Reform or after - that its impact was felt.

Nor was it the same in Norwich and Coventry. Indeed the difference between the two cities in this respect is striking; it was much more rapid, extensive and extreme in the former than the latter. To explain why this was so it has been necessary to look at the very different social, political and economic development of each town in the years 1660 to 1835. By the end of that period Norwich was bitterly divided with a working class which was both impoverished and subordinate. Coventry, on the other hand, was a relatively harmonious and prosperous community in which the working class was assertive, confident and well able to defend its values against attacks from outside its ranks. Consequently while rejoicing and ritual continued and prospered in the latter city until well after Municipal Reform, in the former it could be attacked, abused, and frequently undermined.

The importance of studying public festivity in context is thus confirmed. For without an appreciation of the environment in which it was performed any analysis of rejoicing and ritual in this or indeed any other period has to be considered as anitquarianism of the very worst kind.

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Appendices:

A. List of festival dates.

B(1) Plan of Norwich 1783

B(2) Map of Coventry 1807.

B(3) Map of Coventry 1906 i.e. after the
major reconstruction of the early
nineteenth century.

**C. Notice for and illustration of the
Godiva Procession.**

**D. Flysheets making use of Guild Day
images in 1835.**

Appendix A.

Dates of the major festivals on the holiday calendars of Norwich and Coventry.

Fixed feasts.

December 25 - Christmas Day.
December 26 - Boxing Day.

January 1 - Feast of the Circumcision and, after 1752,
New Year's Day.
January 6 - Feast of the Epiphany.
January 30 - Martyrdom of King Charles 1.

February 3 - St Blaise's Day.

May 29 - Restoration of Charles 11.

August 1 - Lammas Day. [1]

October 25 - St Crispin's Day.

November 1 - All Saint's Day.
November 4 - Landing of William of Orange at Torbay,
1688.
November 5 - Guy Fawkes Day.
December 21 - St Thomas's Day.

Movable feasts.

Easter Sunday could take place between 22nd of March and the 25th of April.

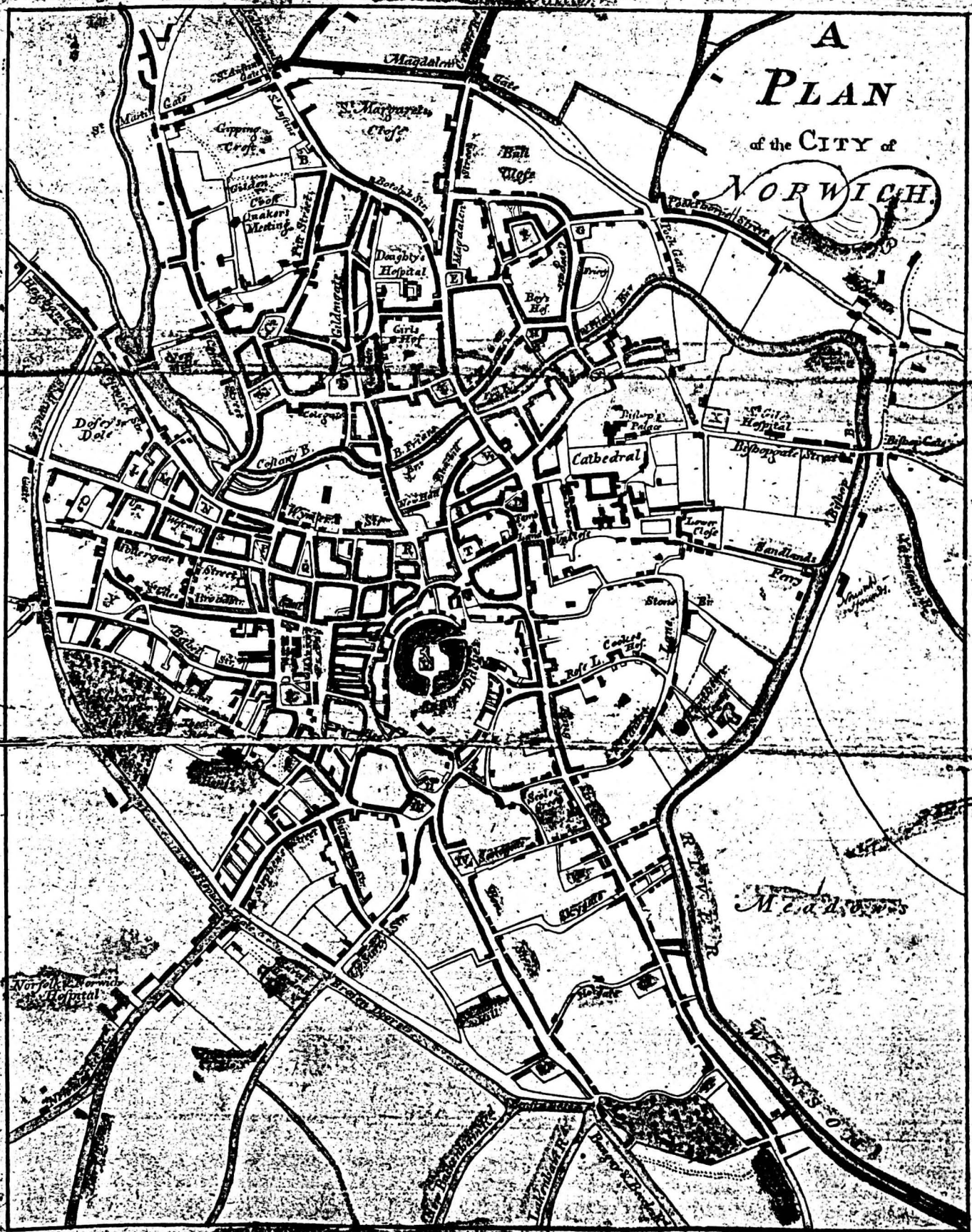
Plough Monday - Monday after the Epiphany.

Shrove Tuesday - Day before Ash Wednesday.
Good Friday - Friday before Easter Sunday.

Hock Tuesday - Second Tuesday after Easter.
Rogation Sunday - Fifth Sunday after Easter.
Whit-Sunday (or Pentecost) - Seventh Sunday after Easter.
Trinity-Sunday - Eighth Sunday after Easter.
Corpus Christi - Thursday after Trinity Sunday.

Godiva Procession - Corpus Christi Thursday.
Guild Day - Tuesday preceeding Midsummer's Day.

1. Riding the Lammas in Coventry took place on August 13th after the calendrical change of 1752.



NORW

Gentlemen

An alphabetical
they Add

With

Streets, Lanes, Ma
public Buildings,
council, Commi
Dean and Chap
Request, House a
Bankers, Physi
cians, &c. Car
Vells, Post and
Court of Guard
folk, Seats near
Free-Masons, So
Boarding-Schools
Trade, Manufac
London and Hull
Parishes, Incumb
the County of th

A Sketch of

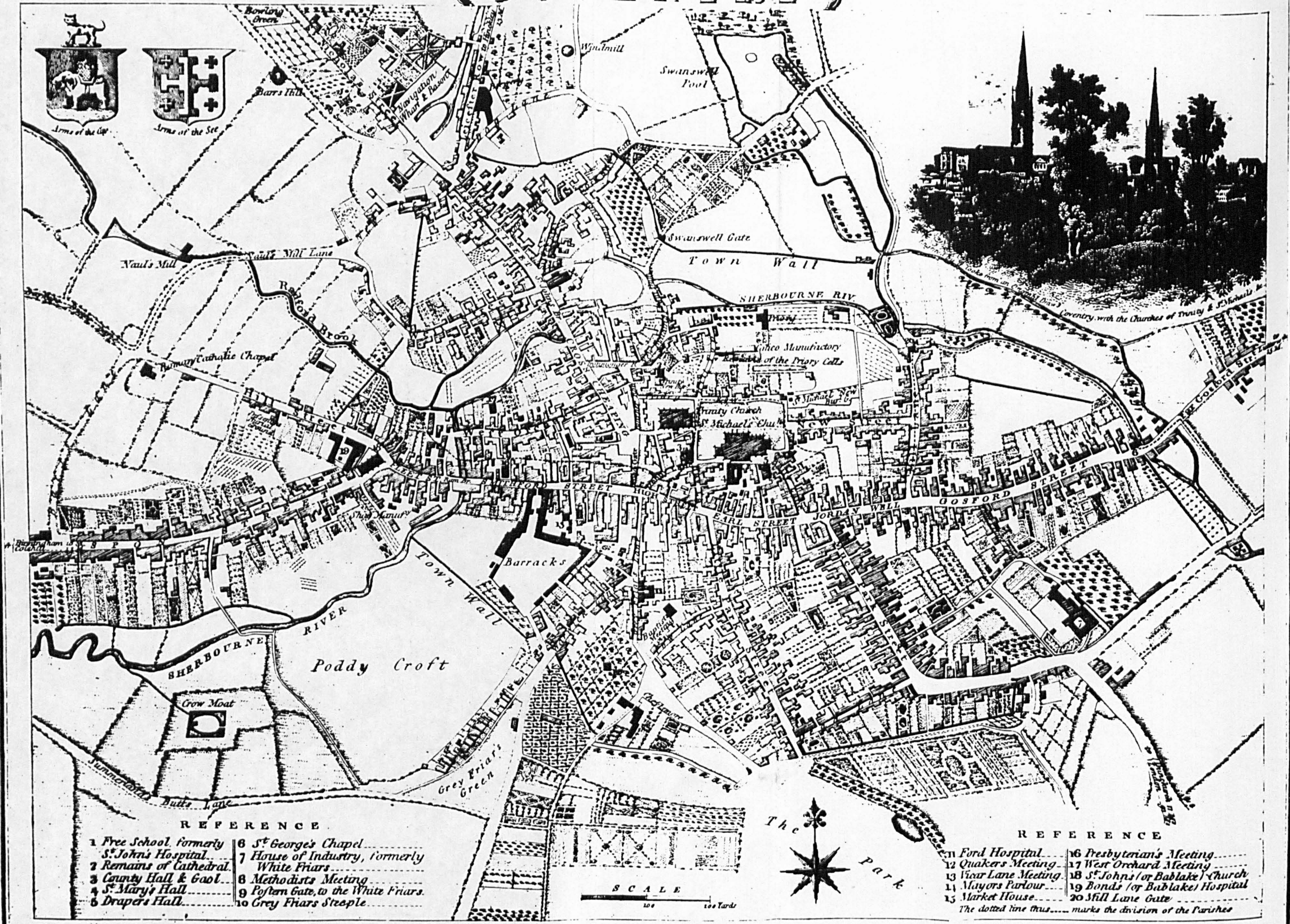
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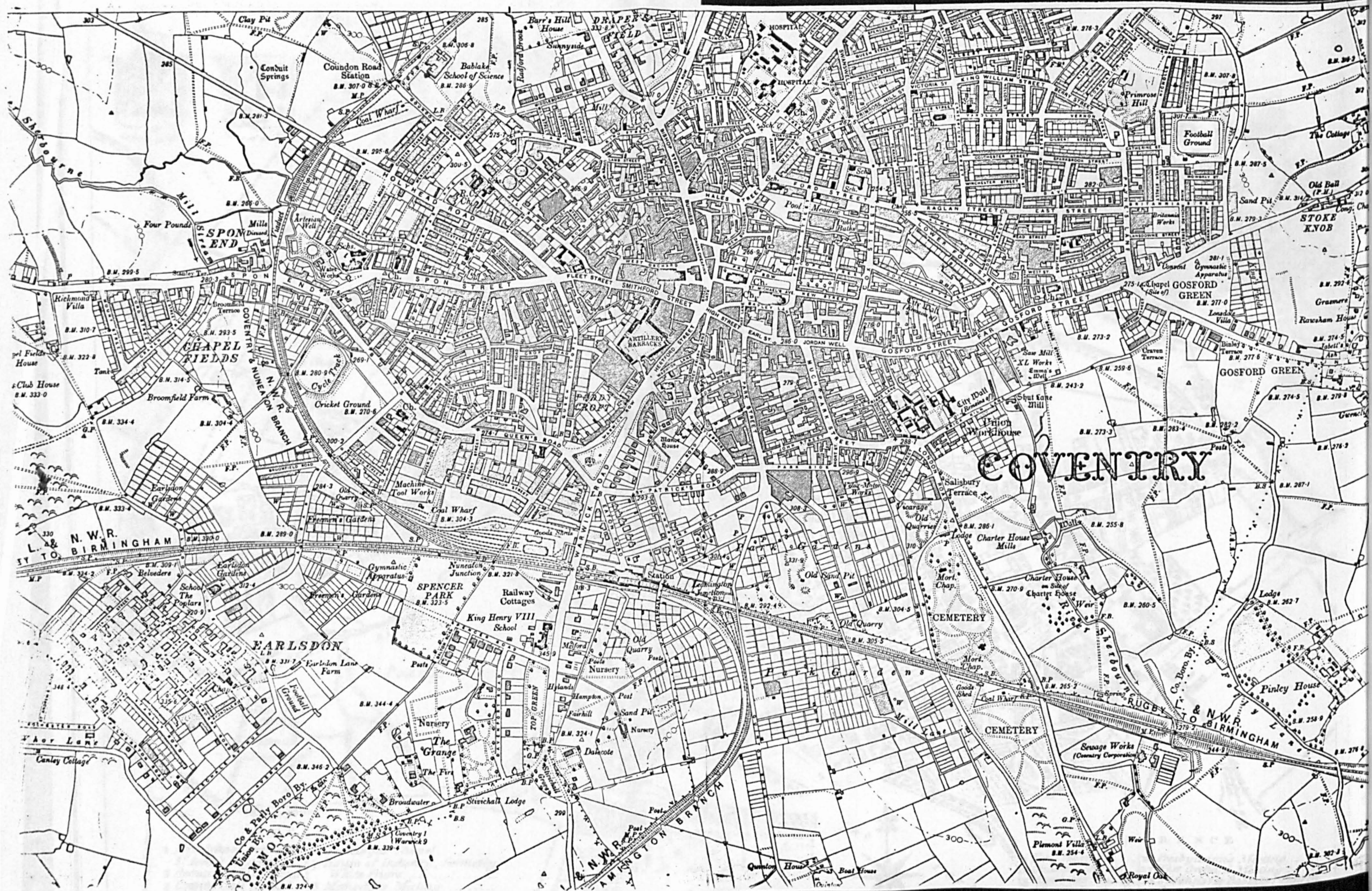
Printed and Sold

Price

COVENTRY



THOMAS SHARP'S MAP OF COVENTRY 1807



Coventry 1906 : Ordnance Survey 6" Warwickshire XXI S.E.



GRAND PROCESSION of COVENTRY SHOW FAIR, JUNE 18, 1824.

Starts precisely at Twelve o'Clock, and proceeds

FROM
SAINT MICHAEL'S CHURCH YARD,
Through Hay-Lane,
HIGH-STREET,
Down Hertford-Street, turn on the Green
SMITHFORD-STREET,
Up Spoon-Street, and back again,
West Orchard,—Cross-Cheaping,—Burgess,
Well-Street,—Bishop-Street,

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.
CHIEF OF THE GUARDS.
Two Lieutenants in Chief,
City Guards—Two and Two.
SAINT GEORGE, armed cap-a-pee.
FOUR BUGLE HORNS.

KNIGHT IN SILVER ARMOUR,
Mounted on a Charger, richly caparisoned.
City Streamer.
Two City Followers.
City Streamer.

GRAND BAND OF MUSIC,
In splendid Uniform.
HIGH CONSTABLE.
LADY GODIVA.
City Cryer and Boodle on each Side.

CROSS-CHEAPING—HIGH-STREET,
EARL-STREET,
JORDAN-WELL,
Gasford-Street,—Fair Proclaimed,—back again,
Muck Park-Street,—Fair Proclaimed,
St. John's-Street—Little Park-Street,
HAY-LANE, TO THE CHURCH YARD.

City Bailiffs.
Mayor's Cryer. . . . City Maces.
SWORD AND MACE.
THE
Rt. Wershipful the Mayor,
Mayor's Followers.
ALDERMEN,
SHERIFFS.
SHERIFFS FOLLOWERS.
COMMON COUNCIL.
Chamberlains.
Chamberlains Followers.
WARDENS.
Wardens Followers.
GRAND BAND OF MUSIC,
In Uniform.
DRUMS AND FIFES.

Companies.

MERCERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
DRAPERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
CLOTHIERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
BLACKSMITHS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
TAILORS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.

GRAND BAND OF MUSIC.
DRUMS AND FIFES.
CAPPERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
WEAVERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
BUTCHERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
FELLMONGERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
GRAND BAND OF MUSIC.
DRUMS AND FIFES.
CARPENTERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
CORDWAINERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.

BAKERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
SILK WEAVERS,
Streamer, Master, and Followers.

GRAND BAND OF MUSIC.
DRUMS AND FIFES.
The Loyal Independent Order of
ODD FELLOWS,
St. Michael's Lodge, No. 2,
Master, Officers, Banner, and Followers.

Societies.

Royal Oak Benefit Society.
Master, Streamer, and Followers.
Griffin Benefit Society.
Master, Streamer, and Followers.
Star Benefit Society.
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
Woolpack (late Chase) Benefit Society.
Streamer, Stewards, and Followers.
Half Moon Benefit Society.
Streamer, Stewards, and Followers.
GRAND BAND OF MUSIC.
DRUMS AND FIFES.
Windmill Watchmakers' Benefit Society.
Streamer, Stewards, and Followers.
Dyers' Arms Benefit Society.
Streamer, Stewards, and Followers.

Loyal Orange Lodge, No. 35,
Master, Banner, and Followers.
Roe Buck Benefit Society.
Streamer, Stewards, and Followers.
Woolpack Watchmakers' Benefit Society.
Streamer, Stewards, and Followers.
Windmill Benefit Society.
Streamer, Stewards, and Followers.
GRAND BAND OF MUSIC.
DRUMS AND FIFES.
Anchor Benefit Society.
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
Wheat Sheaf Benefit Society.
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
Holly Bush Benefit Society.
Streamer, Master, and Followers.
Veteran Benefit Society.
Streamer, Master, and Followers.

Woolcumbers,

Streamer, Master, and Followers.
SHEPHERD & STEPHENSON.
With a Dog, Lamb, &c.
JASON,
With a Golden Fleece and Drawn Sword,
FIVE WOOL SORTERS.
BISHOP BLAZE and
WOOLCOMBERS,
In their respective Uniforms,
GRAND BAND OF MUSIC.



OLD MORE'S IRON-GLYPHICKS:

OR,

Snap Metamorphosed, Being No. I.

Of a series of Terrestrial Configurations of the old Norwich constellation which has so long
been in the ascendant, but will take its departure on the 26th Dec. 1835,

(IT IS PRESUMED

For New South Wales;)

NEVER AGAIN TO BE SEEN BY THE PEOPLE OF

THIS DEVOTED CITY,

FOR, AFTER THE ABOVE STATED PERIOD

THERE WILL BE NO MORE!!!



STOP courteous reader, ponder on these rhymes,
Mark well! the bodings of the coming times!
Not wars, nor rumour'd wars, nor hair breadth 'scapes!
Terrestrial Bodies chang'd to varied shapes!

The Gods through favour for this chief of rogues
Transform'd his *Highness Snap* to *Bellows* broad—

That future ages shouldn't know his Brogues
They tighten'd up his breeches to each board—

A *valve* placed where his Bearers did intrude,
For Him to inhale breath, to puff it out,

For neck and head they gave a *hollow tube*
Which Ironmongers style the *BELLOWS SPOUT*.

Transfigur'd thus, what future age can know

That *Bellows* led the *Van* at Guild day Show?

Oh! oh! *Sirs Macers*, where are now your *Maces*?

What on your shoulders bear you in their places?

Firepan and Tongs I see are bold display'd !!

Bright symbols of the Ironmonger's Trade!

Alas! and alack a-DAY—thy *Cap* of State !!

And what by *dame Fortune* hast thou on thy pate!

An Iron Pot! oh! how weighty that must feel!

And where, oh! where's thy shining *Sword* of Steel?

Ah! ah! ah! ah! that man is sure a joker

He grasps for sword of State an Iron Poker !!

Ah! wretch that thou art! thou quick hast run thy race!

Fie, haste thee, Good-DAY, go hide thy *Blushing Face*!

One *More* !! is to be seen, who, with *Iron Brow*,

The chain of glittering Gold, of *GILT-ALL SHOW*

He no *MORE* !! shall wear, he's hung about alas

With Padlock, Stove-grate, and Warming-pan of Brass !!

What threat'ning front He wears, oh! what terrify !!

Fearful Signs, forbode Old *MORE'S IRON-GLYPHICKS* !!!

No. 2 will appear in a few days.

SNAP REDIVIVUS;

OR, A
SLAP
AT THE
WHIGS,



CONTINUATION
OF THE
Municipal
CHARACTERS.

No. 15.

SATURDAY, 11th JUNE, 1836.

Price 1d.

We have at length made our Second Appearance, and although in a somewhat different shape, still we hope our New Series on inspection, will be found to merit the continued approbation of our friends, and fellow citizens;—that approbation which has hitherto been our study to deserve, and which has kept pace with our sincere desire to make them merry—while at the same time we have been unsparing in our efforts, to show up *Vice and Profligacy* wherever they exist, and to bring into deserved contempt, that *Folly and Ignorance*, which has manifested itself on several occasions within the walls of our whig-ridden City.

The importance of Political Pasquinades and Caricatures has been fully proved, from the times of the ancient Poets and

Writers down to the present period, and there is little doubt but they have had their effect, both upon the minds and the actions of those persons who have writhed beneath their lash.

Thus we shall go on in the paths of what we humbly conceive to be our duty, *spite of any threats or intimidation* that may be thrown in our way, gently reminding our Political Antagonists, that "The more they stir, the more they will sink in the mire".

We now beg leave to present to our numerous readers a representation of the horrific situation of the celebrated *worthy and upright T. O.*, whose unjust incarceration of our respected *friend Snap* has we consider amply merited all the censure in our power to bestow.



"At the peaceful midnight hour".—THE WOLF.

Air:—"Giles Scroggins' Ghost."

'Twas Midnight and the neigh'ring chimes,
Had struck that solemn hour;
When mighty T. O. rest to find,
Sought sleep's lethargic power.

But hollow sounding on his ear,
He heard a dismal sound;
Uplifted by his rising hair,
His Night-cap reach'd the ground.

And such a sight now met his eye,
His rush-light burning blue;
A *Scaly Crest* uprising high,
With *Dragon's Body* too!

In horror rose our startled wight!
No sound the silence broke!
Pale as the sheets, in dumb affright,
When thus the Phantom spoke.—

* Behold! I'm come for you to night,
Ri, tol, &c.
Old Nick he wants you! honor bright!
Ri, tol, &c.
And you must go with me, I say,
Pray don't you see I've got away,
From where you shut me up all day.
Ri, tol, &c.

And now I'm here, I'll make you rue,
Ri, tol, &c.
Well may you shake and look so blue,
Ri, tol, &c.
What have you done you Paltry Thing?
Where are the sports that *Guild-day* bring,
That made so many Joyous sing?
Ri, tol, &c.

But talking now is all my eye,
Ri, tol, &c.
So to Old Nick away we'll fly,
Ri, tol, &c.
Snap seized him quick as lightning gleam!
He shriek'd a shriek, he scream'd a scream,—
Then "woke, and found it was a dream!"
Ri, tol, &c.

Norwich: Printed by Davy & Berry, Albion Office, opposite Cockey-lane, St. Andrew's.